How Print Heals: Women and Trans Creators Use Zines and Comics to Challenge the Mental Health Status Quo

brokenpencil

THE MAGAZINE OF ZINE CULTURE AND THE INDEPENDENT ARTS

PIPELINE PUSHBACK: INDIGENOUS ARTISTS FIGHT CANADA'S ADDICTION TO EXTRACTION

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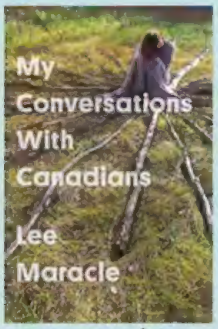
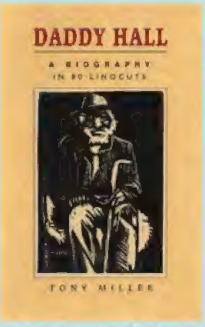


The book that "Canada 150" needs.

BOOKTHUG | NON-FICTION

Personal stories by Canadian Muslim Women.

MAWENZI HOUSE | ESSAYS

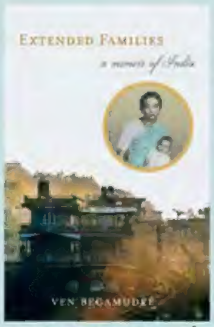


A striking visual saga of resilience and reinvention.

PORCUPINE'S QUILL | GRAPHIC NOVEL

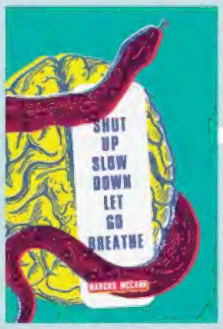
A friend's fame is a tough act to follow.

NEWEST PRESS | FICTION



Beautifully illuminates the bonds of family.

COTEAU BOOKS | MEMOIR



"McCann's poems wrap wisdom in bacon: if you like life, you'll like them." —*Winnipeg Free Press*

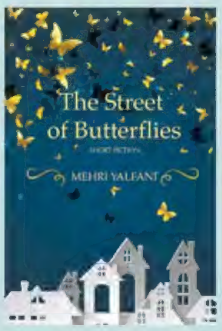
INVISIBLE PUBLISHING | POETRY

"...a brave, honest voice." — Tomson Highway

BARAKA BOOKS | FICTION

"Raw and poetic." —*Globe and Mail*

FREEHAND BOOKS | FICTION



Stories about building a home, away from *home*.

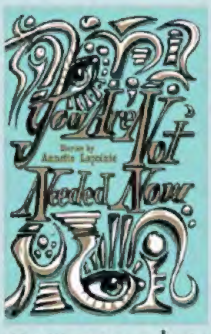
INANNA PUBLICATIONS | SHORT STORIES

A dominatrix, alien beings... what could go wrong?

ANVIL PRESS | FICTION

A compelling residential school survivor's story.

BOOKLAND PRESS | POETRY



Diverse, strange, complex stories.

ANVIL PRESS | SHORT STORIES

BOOKS WORTH CELEBRATING

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF THE **LITERARY PRESS GROUP** | LPG.CA

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Artwork *Broken Pencil* encourages artists and illustrators to reach out for publication or collaboration . Please send proposals to editor@brokenpencil.com. If you would like to become a regular illustrator for *Broken Pencil*, please send a letter and samples of your work to editor@brokenpencil.com.

Fiction *Broken Pencil* accepts submissions of short fiction (50-2,000 words) between February 1st and September 15th, and for Indie Writers' Deathmatch between September 16th and December 21st. For more information visit brokenpencil.com/submissions.

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ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL | CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
50 YEARS OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS
50 ANS DE SOUTIEN DU GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO AUX ARTS

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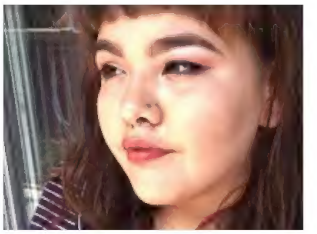
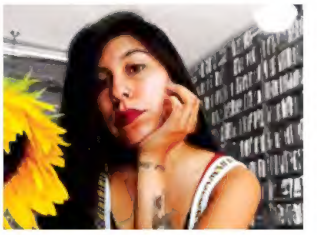
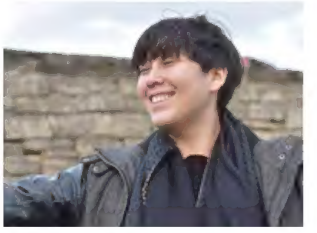


Summer-Harmony Twenish is a queer Algonquin femme from Kitigan Zibi, Quebec. She is an Art History major at Carleton University and is a self-described anticolonial hooligan whose work is driven by her duty to her community and the strong Anishinabe matriarchs who came before her. Follow her: @nibinikwe



Luz Magdaleno Flores is a Mexican writer, fotógrafa, bookmaker, and overall creative. Follow her: @lightofyourvida



Ange Loft is a multi-disciplinary performing artist, associate artistic director of Jumblies Theatre and vocalist with Yamantaka//Sonic Titan.

Anisa Rawhani is the new Assistant Editor of Broken Pencil. She works as a journalist and editor in Toronto — and would like nothing more than for you to send her wholesome photos of your pets. Doggos, kittens, piglets, ducklings, cows, bunnies, and all others are welcome. She does not discriminate.

IT'S ZINE FAIR SEASON!

Chances are, if you're reading this issue of *Broken Pencil*, you've dropped by or exhibited at Canzine, *Broken Pencil's* massive zine fair, in at least one of four Canadian cities. If that's the case, thanks a ton for coming and supporting Canada's zine scene, whether you did so in Toronto, where vendor registration filled up in six minutes (sorry about that!) or in our newest host city, Calgary! If not, you obviously missed out — so make sure to come next year or support a zine fair near you soon.

As a visitor to Canzine, you probably acquired — whether through trades, pay-what-you-can jars, or some hopefully reasonable price schemas — a whole stack of zines varying wildly in topic, shape, size, era, material, and complexity. It can be a marvel to see, so first of all, take a picture of your haul and tag us on Instagram, duh: **@brokenpencilmag**. But also, pay careful attention to what happens to these zines over time.

You'll read some of the zines right way, maybe sitting in the stairway with friends before the festival is even over. Others you might put on your shelf or on your desk, waiting for the right moment to dig in. Later, you'll be having a conversation with a friend or a stranger in a park, in a library, on a couch, and recall that you have the perfect zine somewhere to lend to that other person. Maybe you'll donate your zines to a zine library or an archive somewhere, or maybe you'll watch them dwindle one by one at a yard sale. Maybe you'll be like me and live in a perpetual whirling chaos of stacks of paper and overcrowded bookshelves.

In any case, zines have a life, and what a life they have! Because they are often so easy to distribute, copy, share, and consume, zines tend to travel a bit. Watching the directions that your zines may go might tell you about your relationships in your life, and they might tell you a bit about yourself. But importantly, you might also learn something about the way information, identity, stories, politics, and art play out socially and over time. Like I said, watch where your zines go and what your zines do.

I hope that this issue will complement the frenetic and organic diaspora of zines that starts at so many zine fairs like Canzine. Whatever the medium, writing and art soars through and saturates our communities and our relationships in unexpected ways.

For some, drawing the connections between zines and sharing them with others is itself nourishing. In that vein, Lauren Kirshner has put together a guide to works by women and trans creators making zines and comics about their mental health struggles.

Meanwhile, Summer-Harmony Twenish's piece on artists responding to pipelines reveals how long-held and deeply valuable community connections foster collective resistance. She has written profoundly about the way Indigenous resurgence movements use shared creative knowledge in ways that predate and transcend settler notions of what "art" is, or how it works politically, protecting the Earth and each other.

Oh and, don't just pay attention to the life of your zines or community arts — think about the paths of the books being read by the kids in your life, too. Our profile of Flamingo Rampant, a press focusing on centering people of colour and LGBTQ kids, parents, and creators, is sure to make you want to add to your collection or give to a friend. In fact, when it was being read over by our illustrious proofreader Nico Mara-Mckay, they immediately started looking into buying some books to bring for their nephew. Anisa Rawhani spoke to S. Bear Bergman about how they pull it off.

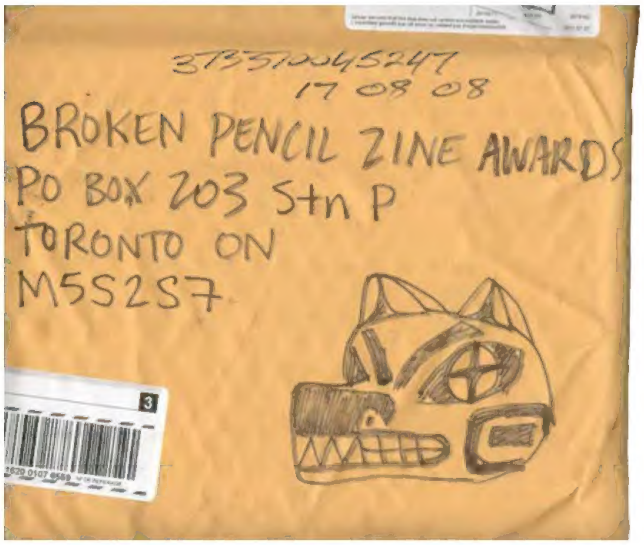
Speaking of Anisa, I want to send a big welcome to her, as she's our incoming Assistant Editor! With an eye for detail (classic resume trope, but it's true with this one!) she's already proven herself a key part of the team.

I'd also like to welcome Kim Hornak, our new Membership & Community Outreach Coordinator. Kim is not only a zinester herself (check out her distro, Invited Ghosts!), but she also brings an awesome background in community radio and is here to help develop ways to give more goodies to our subscribers than ever before — the first of which is our brand new podcast, Read & Distribute! Check it out at **brokenpencil.com/podcast**.

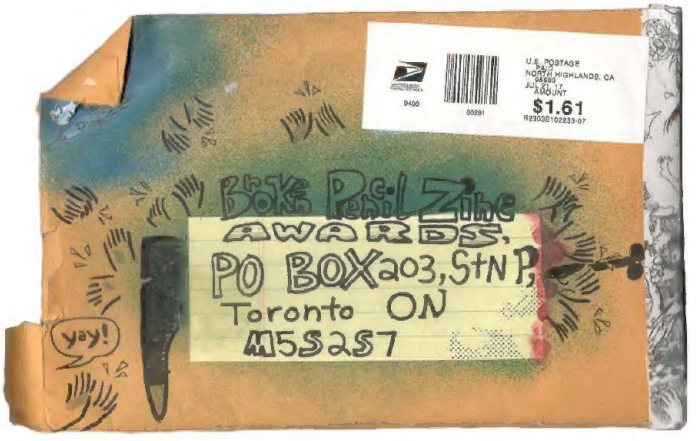
Lastly, I'd like to wish a farewell to our Fiction Editor Colin Brush. Colin's patience and dedication got us through many a Deathmatch glitch, but more importantly he led the fiction team in bringing us excellent and diverse fiction writing into the pages of Broken Pencil issue after issue.

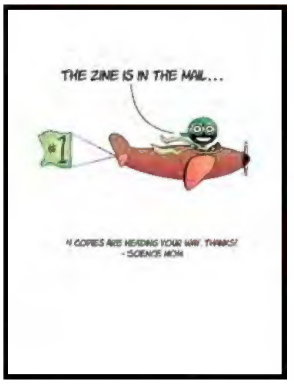
Indeed, people come and go, changing the face of our projects and communities, bringing their particular creative energies from place to place and leaving a trace of their magic behind, even as they tarry on to the next thing. Just like zines, ya know?

Jonathan



HELLO,
I AM MAILING MY SUBMISSION
♡c
DONA MOON - OUR HERO
GUY LE COOL - MECHANIC ASSISTANT
FANCY MANDRAKE - LOCAL DOG, OUTLAW
THE MECHANIC - MECHANIC
MINIONS - KINDA DUMB
PETER CILANTRO - BAD GUY, BIRD





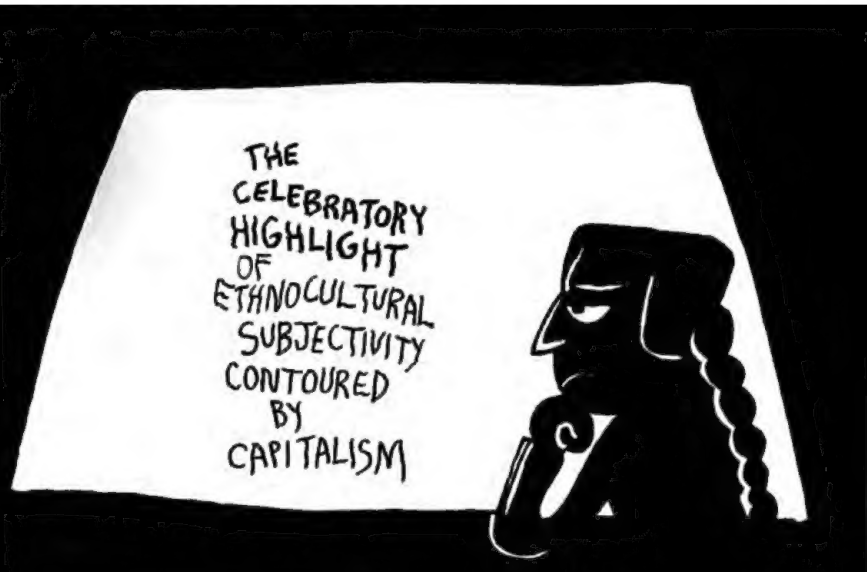
THIS YEAR, we ran the first ever *Broken Pencil Zine Awards*! With nearly 200 entries, we received so many amazing goodies in the mail and online. A few folks tried for extra credit by drawing their envelopes, using fancy packaging, or tricking out their "See Mail Entry" uploads — here's a little selection of some doodles and decorations from those submissions. bp

Seeking Staple-Man:

A Zinester's Journey

DEEP WITHIN the concrete vastness Torontonians call Etobicoke lives an unassuming shop at 668 The Queensway. For any number of obscure reasons, many a creator, installation artist, and ambitious zinester must at some point make a pilgrimage to find those rare and unusual staplers collected and sold by the legendary Staple-Man. I was one of them, and was amazed at what I found.

DIYers, make room in your toolbox. Amongst the Staple-Man's trove of staple treasures is the Rapid HD220. With the capacity to staple anywhere between two and 200 pages using staples varying in length, this sleek stapler stapler puts the household brand to miserable shame. You can also find the P6C-8P, a heavy-duty sword point standing stapler plier, used to staple small boxes and crates. If you are more interested in the dark arts, the Rapid R34 Staple Gun is your bet. Though normally used for wood, carpets, or plastic sheeting, the R34 also works marvelously on securing posters to anything your heart desires. With the introduction of each stapler, visions of new projects lay bare before me. Such are the treasures tucked away in the heartlands of Etobicoke. And if one so ventures a trek to 668 seeking wisdom and staplers, the Staple-Man is ready to guide you to stapler awakening. (Jean Mathew) bp



Staff Pick: Xinona

FOLLOWING his incredibly successful hit comic *Wendy*, Walter Scott has taken some of the themes and characters of the project into a variety of different media — material and sculpture, live performance, and other comics. *Xinona* is one such expansion of the project, a scrolling comic animation hosted on the site of the National Film Board as a part of Canada 150.

Xinona is the alternate universe origin story for the character Winona, an Indigenous artist and Wendy's friend and collaborator. Xinona, her outer space equivalent, is commissioned by Government AKA Weird Heads to create a piece representative of her experience as an artist Indigenous to Kombucha Planet to mark the anniversary of the confederation of her and other planets (including Kale and Beer planets). Of course, they only want her to make something palatable to mainstream narratives of her culture. Sound familiar?

As she begins to create her piece and consider her dilemma — make insincere art for the colonial oppressor, or don't and stay broke? — she plunges deeper into theoretical and ethical quandaries. Eventually, she goes on something of a spiritual voyage through the sea of kombucha. There, she encounters otherworldly guidance, suggesting how she might remake myths of nationhood and cultural identity for herself.

Xinona is a brilliant, self-reflexive commentary on the art world and on the Canada 150 projects. Walter Scott's trademark style bring humour, tenderness, politics and, in this case, science fiction together in such awesome ways. And the scrolling comic/animation format is like something I've never seen before!

Do yourself a favour and take 10 minutes to enjoy *Xinona* at **legacies150.nfb.ca/xinona** (Jonathan Valelly) bp

Sheffield Park BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM

A family's grassroots history project in small-town Ontario

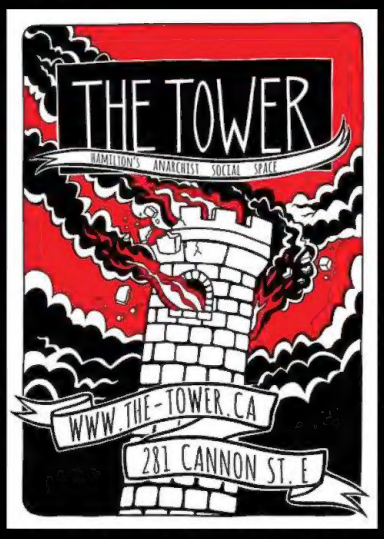
ARRIVING AT SHEFFIELD Park Black History Museum in Clarksburg, Ontario, I had little idea what to expect. We were greeted by the extremely enthusiastic and knowledgeable Carolynn Wilson, who owns and curates the museum with her sister, Sylvia. Full of small town charm and deep passion, Wilson guided us through more than a dozen freestanding building displays, chock full of artifacts and antiques. This is not your typical stuffy, sterile museum: Each display is immersive, and visitors make connections and inferences themselves — with occasional explanation from our kind host.

"We felt if we put plexiglass in front of everything, it would distance people," explained Carolynn. "But if they can walk through that kitchen, and feel that experience, it will bring memories and thoughts, and it also tells people who we are."

The displays reveal a complex nostalgia for eras past, always underlined by the trauma and violence of anti-Black racism. The Wilson family focuses on the positive, each room a celebration of Black resilience and culture. But the museum also offers encounters with some tough stuff: shackles and slave ship remains, or offensive, stereotypical dolls.

These are difficult items to confront, but doing so is perhaps a necessary step toward grappling with Canada's history and realities of white supremacy.

We're currently faced by deep, critical conversations about how we ought to deal with relics of racism — from statues glorifying the American Confederacy to artifacts of chattel slavery. Sheffield Park is a reminder of how global, local and family histories, and present realities, unexpectedly intertwine. Visit sheffieldparkblackhistory.com for more information. (Jonathan Valelly). bp



The Tower

A home for Hamilton radicals, zinesters, and organizers

THE TOWER is Hamilton's Anarchist social space located at 281 Cannon St. East run by a three member collective. They opened their doors in May 2015, creating what collective member Matty describes as a "space meant for political organizing and to connect people." The space itself is a renovated travel agency, turned into large open front room with a sectional sofa, work bench and library in sight. Just behind the sofa is a Pay-What-You-Can zine wall that is curated every couple of months to fit a theme. There's a backroom with a large table and a photocopier where members print off literature, zines and posters that they distribute. The Tower opened after previous organizing spaces in Hamilton were shut down. Collective member Cedar notes that "One of the foundational goals of the project was to confront development and gentrification in the city." Hamilton has undergone intense gentrification in the past couple years, with many Toronto developers eyeing the cheaper housing market. The space can be utilized by anyone to put on events and build community. "We're constantly growing... We're always launching a new series or specific reading groups.," explained Matty. Popular events include the Queer and Trans Social Night, the Monthly Potluck and an Anarchist Assembly every three months. According to Cedar, The Tower is working with funding received from Freedonia to produce anti-racist programming over the course of the next year, and the collective hopes to be able to expand the space to host larger self-defense and martial arts classes. Drop in next time you find yourself wanting for some radical readings in the Hammer.(Sidney Drmay) bp

ART HOLES

Creators diagram where they work

Bug Cru

MY ART SPACE is a desk that is made from an unhinged door underneath a loft bed that a friend built for me for a skill trade.

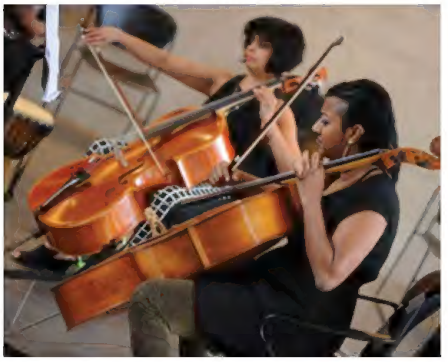
It hides in my bedroom, which is also my studio, nestled up in the attic of a punk house called Lost Cause in south Vancouver. It's by far the nicest space I've ever worked or lived in, so it feels like a blessing to capture it for this column.

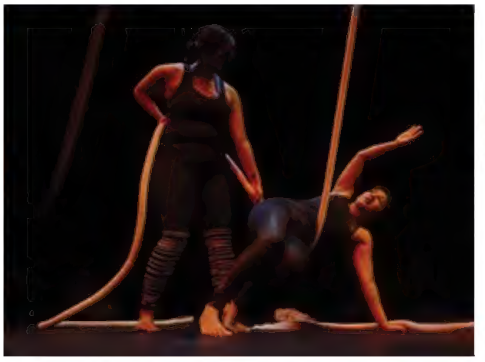
I am a queer and trans visual artist from the West Coast. My media include drawing, illustration, permanent marks on skin, comics, posters, textiles and zines. I identify with Outsider Art, and aim to build relationships with that which is wild, ugly and abstract. My practice is an invitation to a navigation of gender, bodies, magic, trauma, human connection, capitalism and oppression. I draw because self documentation is a vital tool for survival and empowerment, and sometimes it helps pay for groceries. **centipedes.tumblr.com** bp

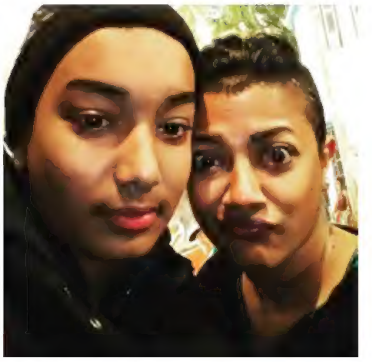
THE SMELL OF OUR OWN

Interviews with the artist in the family

Gitanjali Lena talks to her 14-year-old son about sex, support and sacrifice







GITANJALI IS A QUEER MOTHER, lawyer, and grad student of Sri Lankan origins. She has performed at Desh Pardesh, Word on the Street, the AGO, and with OUTburst and Asian Arts Freedom School. She is published in *Fireweed*, and *Who's your Daddy? Anthology of Queer Writing on Parenting*. She did the VONA Writing Intensive in 2007 and facilitated a poetry workshop about the 2009 Tamil anti-war protests for SAVAC. She performed a dance piece "d3" through Ill Nana DCDC's Right to Dance Intensive, and later attended the Pink Door Writer's Retreat 2016. She is developing a play at Nightwood Theatre. In this edition of Smell of Our Own, she is interviewed by her 14-year-old son, Zul Lena.

Zul Lena: How did being an artist change the way you approached being a parent?

Gitanjali Lena: I would say being a parent changed the way I approached being an artist. I had to find the time to do my creative work while parenting. It was a lot harder when I had a young child, and not so hard now that I have a teenager, but still a challenge. Perhaps being an artist influenced how I parent, because naturally I want to encourage my kid to find different ways of creative expression. Whenever I'm super angry, frustrated, grieving, or depressed, after I've binge watched some TV, I throw myself into some creative projects. So being an artist makes me a better parent, because I'm working through my experiences.

ZL: What would it mean to you if I did or didn't identify as an artist?

GL: I've pretty much given up on trying to force you to identify as anything. That's like my parents wanting me to be some government worker with a pension and a Mercedes. I didn't want those things. Every generation of kids struggles with the hopes and dreams of the parent, each generation changes. I have different values from my parents, so I'm not sitting here hoping that you're going to become a government lawyer. I might be *wishing* that you'd become, I don't know, a trapeze artist, a writer or musician or something. But I guess I don't care if you become an artist or not. You'll find something you want to do.

ZL: Your art talks about identity, queerness, and being Tamil. Does being a parent come into it too?

GL: Yes. I'm really interested in complicating parenting relationships, not just like cookie-cutter type parenting relationships. I'm interested in mothers in particular, Sri Lankan and Tamil mothers who *don't* sacrifice everything for their kids, who actually have a life. [Mothers who] don't resent their kids because they didn't do the things they want. I feel like parents who really fuck up, parents who make a lot of mistakes, parents who are estranged from their kids, parents with addictions ... all of those parents are really interesting to me.

ZL: Why do you always make work about sex?

GL: I don't always make work about sex... But I do think gay people and queer people aren't afraid of looking at sexuality as a mirror for other elements of society. Sexuality is a mirror for power, for work, for love, for self-hate, all kinds of things. That's why people can relate a lot to work that looks to sexuality. Also, queer sexuality is so invisibilized or demonized that I definitely try to show sides of it that are not stereotypical.

ZL: How have your own parents or other family responded to your art?

GL: I'm always terrified to invite them to anything that I'm doing, and the few times I have, even if its really weird and disgusting, they have been pretty supportive. Even the last dance performance I did, my mum came. She seemed to love it, so that was pretty cool.

Is it weird to be interviewed by your kid?

No, you ask me questions all the time. It's nice for you to have to listen to me talk about my artwork. bp

POWER UP! INDIE GAMES

Deaf Game Reviews

by Al Donato

Susan Banks started her accessibility quest after dying 15 times. While playing the sci-fi shooter *Destiny*, she kept getting killed by the Hive at this one spot. Her assailants were a moon alien species — but the real enemy was bad captioning.

Banks is Deaf, and didn't hear a character yelling whenever the Hive approached. The subtitles were too small to notice. Her frustration led to Deaf Game Reviews, her blog dedicated to reviewing games from the perspective of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) players.

Unlike many critics, Banks doesn't focus on whether she loves or hates a game. The typical review process is a shallow dip, most playthroughs kept to under an hour. Her hearing partner, Courtney, then plays the same section, and they swap notes on areas where Banks had trouble, or where dialogue was uncaptioned. Then, Banks plays the game again with Courtney nearby. She rates the games on their captioning, visual cues, controller vibration, and visual engagement. Readers can also give scores to these features, which are paired with Banks' own overall letter grade.

Banks' site reveals that accessibility is a major oversight in game development. While commercial studios can better finance access features, Banks notes that independent creators do so more often.

"It often seems like the AAA studios are most interested in serving only their main player base, so accessibility is kind of an afterthought," Banks wrote in an email. "Indie devs seem to be more connected with their fan base and try to stay on top of what people are asking for, which often makes for better accessibility right out of the gate."

Solutions are easy to code. Implementing subtitles isn't nearly as complicated as 3D physics, nor as costly as animated cutscenes. Yet, some argue that accessibility features weaken immersion, or detract from artistic vision. Perhaps these critics forget the simple toggle option, where players can turn a feature on or off.

Banks sometimes gets personal about other aspects of gaming as a Deaf Muslim woman. When reviewing *Prey*, a game where the protagonist's reality is constantly in flux, she recounted her own struggles with schizophrenia. In a review of *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice*, she praised its portrayal of hearing voices, but noted that the voices were rarely captioned.

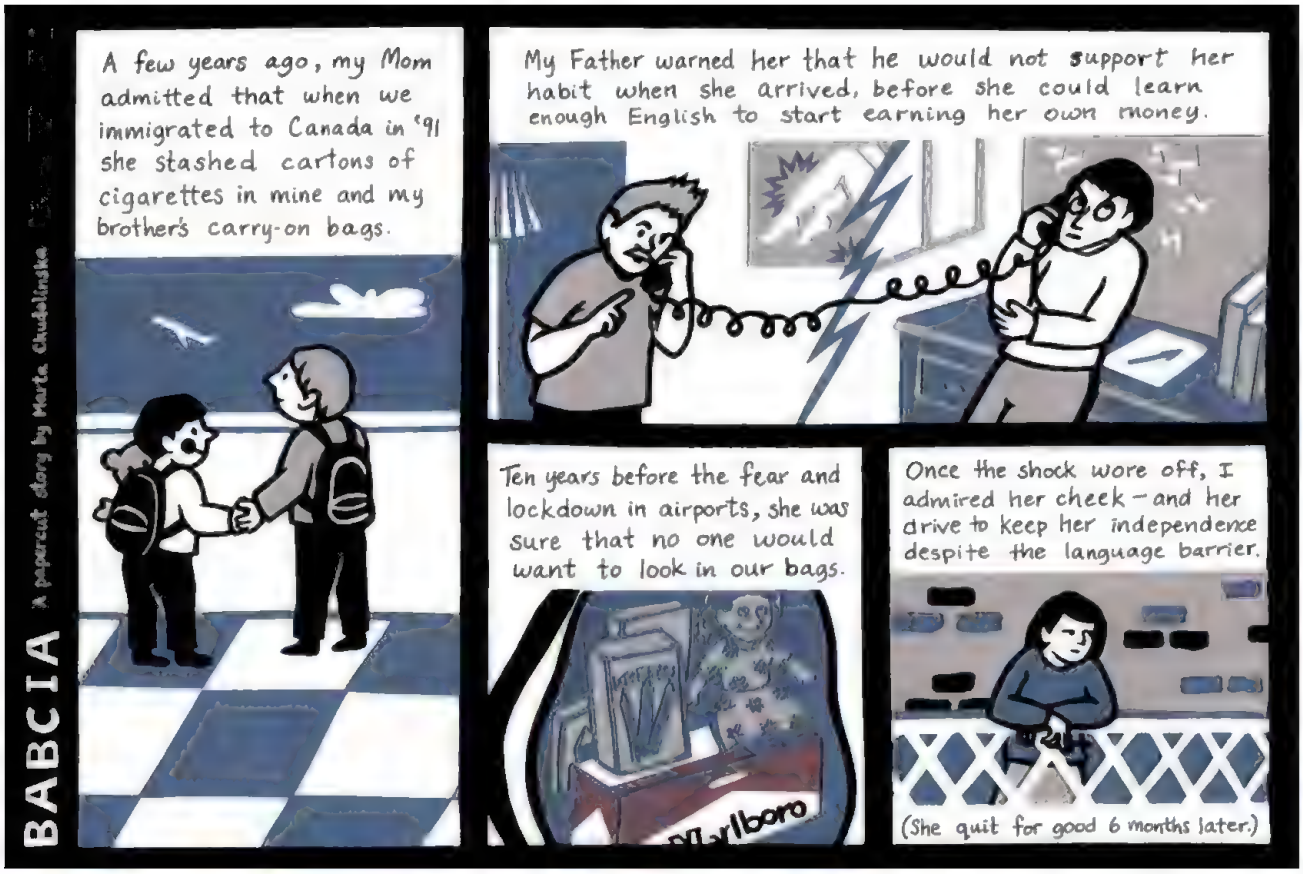
Through her site, Banks does a service for both Deaf players and hearing creators. Banks says developers have contacted her for advice, or to let her know they would try to fix any issues she mentioned. But rather than waiting for a review, Banks urges developers pay pay attention to what Deaf players are already asking for.

"Hire us as accessibility consultants or testers, and just pay attention to what we're saying... We're a pretty large community, and we've not been very quiet about how games fail us," Banks stated. bp

You can read Deaf Game Reviews at **oneoddgamergirl.net**

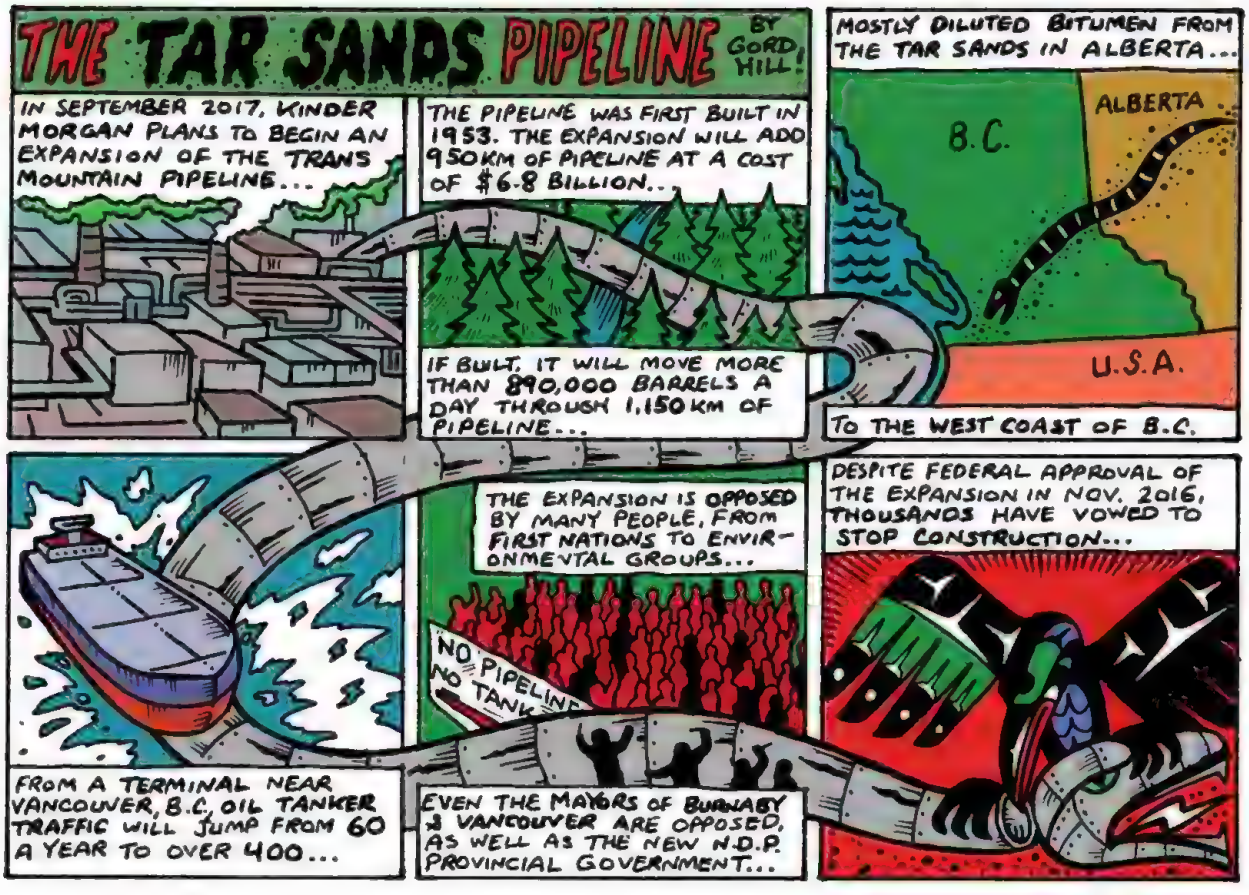
BURGOMASTERPIECE THEATRE

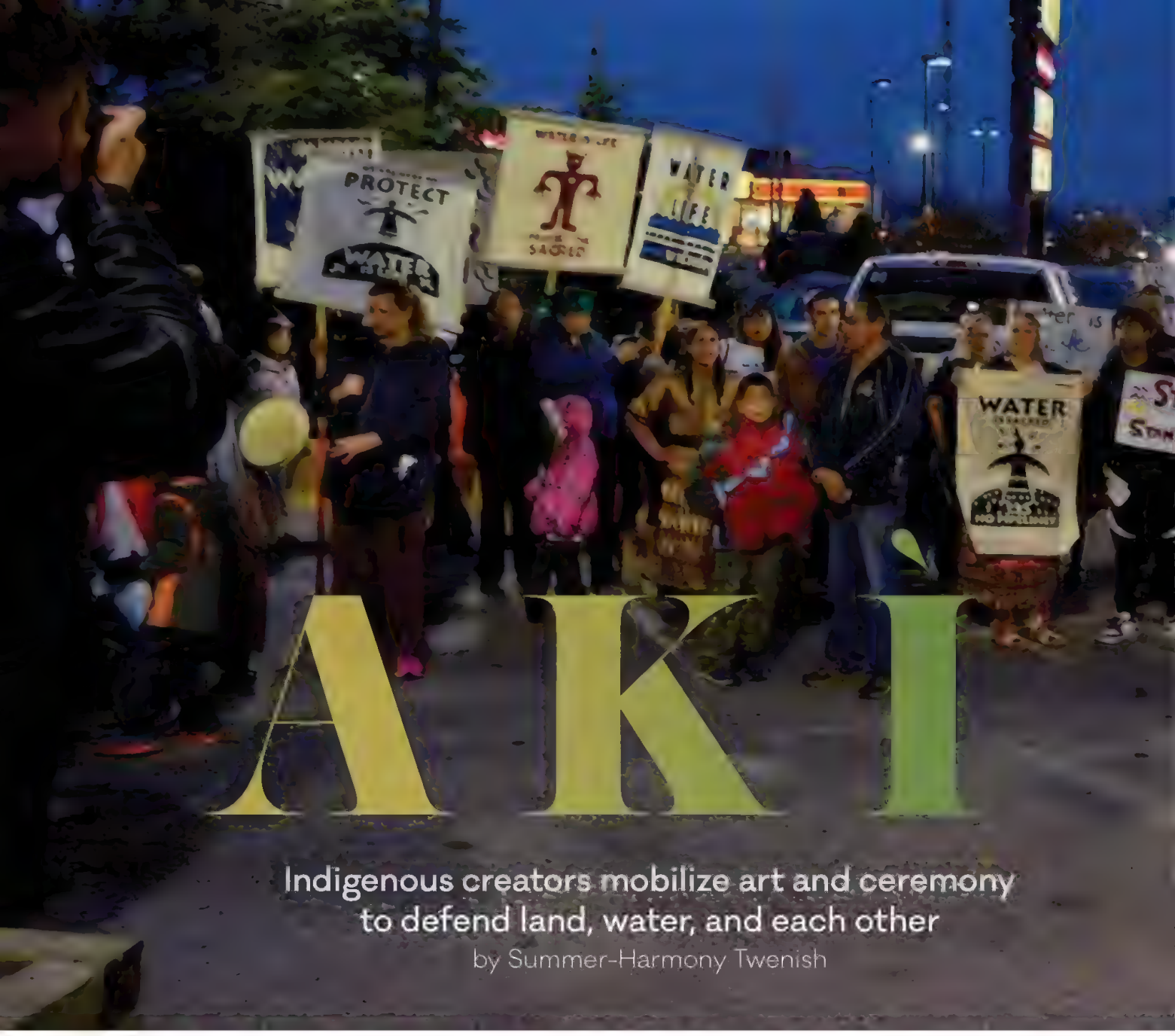
By Patrick Burgomaster


BABCIA A papercut story by Marta Chudzińska
A few years ago, my Mom admitted that when we immigrated to Canada in '91 she stashed cartons of cigarettes in mine and my brother's carry-on bags.
My Father warned her that he would not support her habit when she arrived, before she could learn enough English to start earning her own money.
Ten years before the fear and lockdown in airports, she was sure that no one would want to look in our bags.
Marlboro
Once the shock wore off, I admired her cheek – and her drive to keep her independence despite the language barrier.
(She quit for good 6 months later.)

DINNERROMANTIC
×CHEW×
A RING?!?
SWALLOW.
STEVEN KLEAH

EDGE INDECENT by SOPHIE YANOW
LATELY I SPEND MY FRIDAY NIGHTS FACING OFF WITH 14 YEAROLDS.
SOMETIMES THEY BEAT ME AND SOMETIMES I WIN.
OVER THE YEARS I HAVE GROWN A LITTLE BIT AFRAID OF TEENS — OR I SHOULD SAY, I'VE STAYED AFRAID OF THE SAME KIDS SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL.
PLEASE DON'T LOOK AT ME.
BUT THESE KIDS— THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I DID WITH MY FRIDAY NIGHTS WHEN I WAS 14...
... FACING OFF AGAINST 30 YEAR OLDS...
... AND WINNING.
GOT THERE!
YOU DID!
S. YANOW 2017


THE TAR SANDS PIPELINE
BY GORD HILL
IN SEPTEMBER 2017, KINDER MORGAN PLANS TO BEGIN AN EXPANSION OF THE TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE...
THE PIPELINE WAS FIRST BUILT IN 1953. THE EXPANSION WILL ADD 950KM OF PIPELINE AT A COST OF $6.8 BILLION...
IF BUILT, IT WILL MOVE MORE THAN 890,000 BARRELS A DAY THROUGH 1,150KM OF PIPELINE...
MOSTLY DILUTED BITUMEN FROM THE TAR SANDS IN ALBERTA...
B.C.
ALBERTA
U.S.A.
TO THE WEST COAST OF B.C.
THE EXPANSION IS OPPOSED BY MANY PEOPLE, FROM FIRST NATIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS...
NO PIPELINE
NO TANK
DESPITE FEDERAL APPROVAL OF THE EXPANSION IN NOV. 2016, THOUSANDS HAVE VOWED TO STOP CONSTRUCTION...
FROM A TERMINAL NEAR VANCOUVER, B.C, OIL TANKER TRAFFIC WILL JUMP FROM 60 A YEAR TO OVER 400...
EVEN THE MAYORS OF BURNABY & VANCOUVER ARE OPPOSED, AS WELL AS THE NEW N.D.P. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT...



AKÌ

Indigenous creators mobilize art and ceremony to defend land, water, and each other

by Summer-Harmony Twenish

My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back.

- Louis Riel, July 4, 1885

AKÌ.

IN ANISHINABEMOWIN, "Akì" is the name we give to the Earth, to the soil, to the land underneath our feet. In our creation story, we are taught that Akì is our mother and that our heartbeat is synchronized with hers. From an early age, I was told that no matter how stuck I felt, Akì would provide for me, so long as I took only what I needed. As Anishinabeg, this was our way of life: Akì provided just enough; in turn, we used as much as we needed, making sure to waste nothing. Akì was to be respected and cared for — and when our journeys in this world were over, our bodies were to go back to her. Our territory — the small bit of Akì that the Anishinabeg were entrusted with — was so vital to our way of life that it went beyond physical hunting grounds

and summer encampments. Our land was woven into our ceremonies, our cosmologies, the way we governed our own people and, like a mirror, the land was reflected in our own language.

We are bound to Akì through mutual protection, yet at many direct-action camps and blockades across Turtle Island, it is common to see Indigenous land defenders treated as violent nuisances (*see sidebar). At the Standing Rock encampment opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline, despite being founded a symbol of peace and ceremony, Indigenous land protectors were brutally, but maybe unsurprisingly met with massive state and corporate violence. However, what was perhaps unexpected was the way in which this resistance inspired artists and creators to shape this modern trauma into a path of resurgence.

At the height of the Standing Rock standoffs, Ojibway artist Isaac Murdoch's "Thunderbird Woman" emerged as the symbol of water defence. Murdoch's grassroots arts initiative, the Onaman Collective, base their works on traditional teachings, tying into language revitalization and the resurgence of traditional cultural practices.

So the Thunderbird Woman is a fitting icon. The image is the outline of a woman, with two feathers in her hair, and two large wings instead of arms. In the centre of her chest is a red heart, contrasting against the white background and black painted details of the piece. In Anishinaabe tradition, the thunderbird is a figure of strength and protection. This spirit being is the guardian of the heavens. It beats its wings to cause thunder, and protects Anishinaabe from the horned serpent that guards the area beneath the ground (This explains another key image that has emerged: the large black snake used to describe oil pipelines). The image of a thunderbird and a woman together showcases the

sacred role of women in communities. As givers of life, women have a powerful relationship with Nibì (water), Akì, and children. Thunderbird Woman honours how Indigenous women are born with a duty to protect their nations.

Before his death, Louis Riel stated that his people would sleep for 100 years and, when they awaken, it will be the artists that give them back their spirit. Artists like Rihkee Strap, a Two-Spirit mixed and Métis visual artist based out of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, find their work guided by this prophecy. Strap is dedicated to promoting and supporting other Indigenous artists beyond their personal art.

A habitual collaborator, Strap is often guided by ceremonies, visions, and dreams of other community members. Throughout their creative process while working with the Bawating Water Protectors (BWP), they worked alongside community elders, the Anishinabek Nation, and the Onaman Collective. One instance of collaboration with BWP involved erecting a teepee and building a sacred fire in the parking lot of their local MP's office. During this reoccupation of space, Strap helped to facilitate the creation of four buffalo masks, which were used to protect the identities of the individuals that were there to show support. Throughout this process, the artists and organizers relied on advice from local elders, the Anishinabek Nation, and the Onaman Collective for their organizing and communications.

Strap's method of creation is not meant to be resistance, per se. Instead, it is a means of resurgence.

"[It] feels like a sacred obligation," they reflected.

However, Strap is not so quick to call pieces like Thunderbird Woman and other visual representations of Indigenous teachings "art." They look at the way elders rely on images for clarity in their teachings, and how they use gestures as descriptive language, as a shared mode that predates the Western concept of "art."

"The 'arts' themselves are so steeped in settler individuality, processes, and systems that I often wonder how effective it is," they explained. "This kind of work does not come together without community."

Collaboration with knowledge holders is also a crucial tool for other Indigenous creators responding to these issues. Cole Pauls is a Tahltan First Nations comic artist and illustrator who is best known for his comic series Dakwäkäda Warriors. The comic follows Ts'ür'i and Aghay, two Native space cadets that set out to defend the Earth from a cyborg sasquatch and an evil pioneer. Pauls combines traditional aesthetics with science fiction, placing

Inviting all Canadians and nations across
Turtle Island to re-occupy parliament hill
Meeting at 6pm
at the Canadian
Tribute to Human Rights

EXTRACTION ADDICTION:

During his campaign, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised to strengthen relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Yet once elected, he was quick to approve the expansion of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline and Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline. He even applauded U.S. President Donald Trump's swift executive action to revive the Keystone XL. These projects are not only violations of the autonomy and wellbeing of the groups he said he would support — they will also have devastating effects on the land.

Whether we would like to admit it or not, Canada is a country built for capitalistic exploitation of the land. It is the fifth largest oil producer in the world, and ranks third worldwide in proven oil reserves. Nearly 75% of the world's gold mining companies are headquartered in Canada. Five of the world's 10 top-grossing gold mining companies are Canadian. These numbers showcase just how vital resource extraction and land development are for Canada's economy.

Because of this unfettered profiteering, Akì is no longer Akì. Instead, she is a broken body, barely breathing; this is the result of 150 plus years of her resources being used for more than survival.

But abusing the land is Canada's primary source of income. Thus, there is a switch that flips whenever Indigenous people raise their voices — through art, resistance, and direct action — to rightfully oppose resource extraction and land development. Instead of being recognized as the original inhabitants of the land, we are labelled as protestors. A nuisance. We are not our own nations practicing ceremony or reclaiming our spaces; instead, we are seen as a threat to the state, to land development, to corporate greed.

The Standing Rock camp, near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in South Dakota, was built to oppose the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which would pass through ceremonial territory. What began as a peaceful reoccupation grounded in ceremony snowballed into a months-long standoff against the corporation behind the pipeline, the United States' federal government, and local law enforcement, garnering international attention. Images emerged on social media and news reports of police dog attacks, rubber bullets, tear gas, and sound cannons being used on water protectors.

From clashes between RCMP officers and the Elsipogtog First Nation in 2013, to the hostilities that erupted from the establishment of the Unist'ot'en camp in British Columbia, it is no secret that Indigenous people asserting their right to take up space is something the state and corporations do not take kindly to. Despite the Standing Rock camp being built as a symbol of peace and as a way to reclaim a traditional and sacred ceremonial site, it was painted as something illegal and worthy of state-issued violent retaliation. bp

from Dakwäkäda Warriors by Cole Pauls

SOUTHERN TUTCHONE LANGUAGE KEY

THERE ARE TWO SOUTHERN TUTCHONE DIALECTS; CHAMPAGNE AND AISHIHIK. THE TWO LANGUAGE PRESERVERS I COLLABORATED WITH, SPEAK EACH ONE. KHÂSHA SPEAKS THE CHAMPAGNE DIALECT AND VIVIAN SMITH SPEAKS THE AISHIHIK DIALECT. COLLECTIVELY, THE THREE OF US INCORPERATED THE SOUTHERN TUTCHONE LANGUAGE INTO THIS BOOK.

DAKWAKÄDA (AISHIHIK)	HIGH CACHE	(PAGES 2,6,21)
KWÄDAY DÄN (AISHIHIK)	LONG AGO PEOPLE	(PAGES 1,6,30,32,35)
NÀĮ (AISHIHIK)	BUSHMAN	(PAGES 1,6,10,35)
TS'ÜRKS (AISHIHIK)	RAVEN	(PAGES 1)
AGHAY (AISHIHIK)	WOLF	(PAGES 1,3,5,27)
N'ĘĮ (CHAMPAGNE)	STEAL	(PAGES 1,8,20,32)
SHA (AISHIHIK)	SUN	(PAGES 1)
KWADLAL (CHAMPAGNE)	WON OR DEFEAT	(PAGES 1,2)
MBÄ (CHAMPAGNE)	WAR OR BATTLE	(PAGE 1)
NÄN (AISHIHIK)	EARTH OR GROUND	(PAGES 1,34)
KWÄTSI (AISHIHIK)	BUILD = BUILDING	(PAGES 2,3,10)
NÀLÄÄT (CHAMPAGNE)	SHIP	(PAGES 2,3,4,10,27)
NITHAN (CHAMPAGNE)	THINK = THINKING	(PAGES 2,3,21)
DÄN (AISHIHIK)	PEOPLE	(PAGES 2,7,)
SHÄWKWATHAN (CHAMPAGNE)	SAFE	(PAGES 2,4)
ÄGHÂY (CHAMPAGNE)	YES	(PAGES 3,4,5,21)
YAT'ÄY (AISHIHIK)	SPACE	(PAGES 3,5,26,27)
KWÄCH'E (CHAMPAGNE)	DONE OR FINISH	(PAGE 3)
KWATLÄY (CHAMPAGNE)	LATER	(PAGE 4)
ŁAKI (AISHIHIK)	TWO	(PAGES 4)
TL'AKĮ (CHAMPAGNE)	GOOD ENOUGH FOR NOW	(PAGES 4,5,21,35)
N-DZÄY (AISHIHIK)	EAR	(PAGE 5)
N-NDÄY (AISHIHIK)	EYES	(PAGE 5,32)

Indigenous characters within a space they are rarely seen occupying. While working on his comic, Pauls teamed up with two language preservers who helped him translate his work into Southern Tuchtone. In this way, the comics become a tool for facilitating important conversations on land defence, and the resurgence of the Southern Tutchone language.

Still, why is it that artists with a focus on community and resistance are labelled "radical" in Canada? For Cole Pauls, witnessing the land being demolished for mining, fracking, and other forms of resource extraction is "an extension of colonization and assimilation." Government and corporate encroachment on traditional Indigenous territories constitute a direct attack on Indigenous nationhood. Yet "reconciliation" continues to be a buzzword used by government officials and settler Canadians to wash over this violence.

"[It] starts with respecting our land and our people," according to Pauls. Indeed, mending the severely strained relationship between Canada and Indigenous people can only happen once the government and privately-owned corporations begin acknowledging the jurisdiction Indigenous people have over their territories.

Gord Hill, a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation, finds his art rooted in anarchist beliefs. His comic The 500 Years of *Resistance Comic Book* from Arsenal Pulp Press depicts various stories of Indigenous resistance to European colonization of the Americas. One story Hill portrays is the clash between the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kanehsatà:ke and the people of Oka in Quebec in 1990. The clash began when the town of Oka decided it wanted to build a golf course over traditional Kanehsatà:kehró:non territory. When the project was opposed by the people of the Mohawk settlement, they were met with racist violence at the hands of their settler neighbours. The people of Kanehsatà:ke were labelled a nuisance for halting a project that was meant to strip them of their traditional territory to appease settler capitalist greed.

"Maintaining traditional culture, including art, is an important part of decolonization," reflects Hill. For this reason, Hill's use of comic arts to tell these becomes an active form of resistance.

Many settlers neglect to acknowledge that, like our "art," our "protests" can be more than just that. They can be a form of ceremony. They can be assertions of jurisdiction over our traditional territories, reclaiming spaces that have been stolen from us.

Indigenous folks are born with resilience in our blood, our bones, our breath. From an early age, we are brought up in a state that refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of our existence. Instead, we walk through your stolen territory as a living, breathing form of resistance. For Indigenous artists, sharing our stories of resilience, working collaboratively, and centring tradition transforms the narrative from one of loss to one of strength. Reoccupying our territories through direct action, through art, is not radical — it is in fact necessary for our survival. And it is our duty to ourselves, our communities, and to Akì. bp

FLAMINGO RAMPANT

Feminist, racially-diverse, LGBTQ-positive books for all children and families

by Anisa Rawhani

ONE EVENING, while reading a bedtime story to his three-year-old son, S. Bear Bergman noticed an alarming pattern. It seemed like every LGBTQ-themed picture book he read was riddled with bullying, harassment and violence.

Most often, the plot would go a little something like this:

A child or parent comes out/is outed.

Their community treats them horribly.

Then, in the conclusion, there's some sort of reconciliation.

Not exactly the type of book you can read to your kid and then just say, "Ok, sweet dreams."

It's true that LGBTQ kids and families can face serious harassment and violence, but Bergman-said being constantly confronted with that narrative was exhausting and overwhelming.

Sara Elisabeth Photography

"If every book a kid encounters has someone who is LGBTQ being treated like crap because of it, then are we not suggesting to children that that is the natural state of things?" he said. "I started to think: what would it mean to normalize the idea of queer and trans people for children, so that when they grow up and encounter actual trans and queer people, their immediate reaction isn't to be so alarmed and upset that they want to beat people to death with a piece of plumbing pipe?"

From that question, Bergman founded Flamingo Rampant, a micro-press that focuses on publishing diverse, positive and affirming books about LGBTQ kids and families.

The first step came when an organizer for a conference for gender-independent kids asked Bergman to write a kids' book. She had tried to find something to read to trans kids and their siblings at the conference, but couldn't find anything remotely positive.

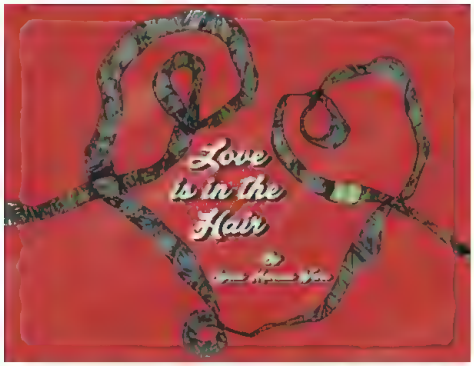
So Bergman, an author of grown-up books, took a crack at it, and the result was two fanciful children's books featuring trans characters. Parents started asking Bergman where they could buy them, so he set out to have them published — only to be rejected by publishers at every turn.

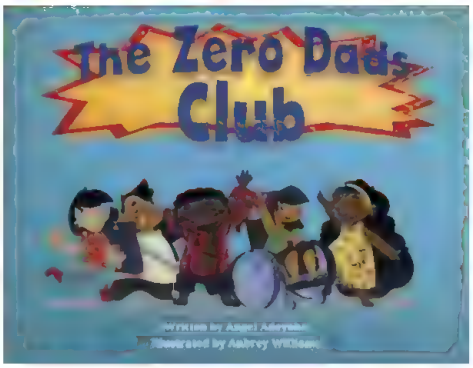
"One editor said to me, 'These are really cute, but we're not going to publish them. But if you write any books about normal children, I'd love to see them,'" he said. "Normal children, my ass."

Fed up, Bergman and his husband, j wallace skelton — both of whom are trans — decided to publish the books themselves through Kickstarter in 2012. Backers pledged $18,555 and *Backwards Day* and *The Adventures of Tulip, Birthday Wish Fairy*, were brought to life.

"People loved them," Bergman said. "I got fan mail in crayon ... There's nothing better than that."

"I kind of thought that was going to be the end of it."





It wasn't. With eight books previously published, Flamingo Rampant launched six more on September 17th, celebrating with a big launch at Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop.

The books feature kids of varying abilities, backgrounds and genders — but the stories aren't about lecturing kids on the importance of diversity. They're about topics kids love, like pirates and space; fairies and superheroes. With stories like *A Princess of Great Daring*, Flamingo Rampant gives kids the adventure and excitement they crave, while simultaneously normalizing the experiences of LGBTQ children and their families.

Once Flamingo Rampant was launched, some rules were set for moving forward: at least half of the books published had to feature kids of colour, have girls and women as the primary problem solver, and have artists and writers of colour.

That last rule is critical, because while there's been a slight rise in diversity in kids' books characters, that doesn't mean that same diversity is reflected among book creators being published.

The Cooperative Children's Book Center in the University of Wisconsin-Madison gathers statistics on multiculturalism in kids' books every year. Of the 3,400 kids' books they analyzed in 2016, only 286 were about Black characters and only 93 of those were by Black authors. That means that about 66% of books about Black characters weren't written and/or illustrated by Black creators.

Flamingo Rampant has made an "intense, concerted effort to move beyond the model of variety," Bergman said. "Not this sort of Dolls of the World, collect the set diversity, where everyone basically looks the same but you colour them a bunch of different shades, and say like, 'Oh. We made diversity. Aren't we great?'"

Instead, Bergman said they strive for the type of diversity where characters are fully realized, and families and communities are shown as they really are. That means not only showing diversity of gender and race, but all backgrounds, experience and ability. Because after all, not every child has a house with a backyard. Not every child has two parents. And not every child runs around on two legs.

Representing this diversity can be very meaningful for families.

This past fall, Bergman got an email from a mother in the United States who had ordered six books. She'd been looking for queer-positive, trans-positive books to read to her four kids, especially for her child who is gender-independent. Bergman said her kids loved them — but what she hadn't expected was the impact the books had on her sister's children, one of whom uses a wheelchair.

Bergman recalled how her email had said, "I can't tell you how meaningful it was for this older child to get — from the six books that came in mail ... two [books that] featured main characters that used wheelchairs."

"And that wasn't the point of the story," Bergman said. "It was just like: here's a kid we learn things about, who has positive things to contribute, who is fully present and realized as a character who uses wheels."

Flamingo Rampant's books are by and large for LGBTQ kids so they can finally see themselves reflected in a meaningful and positive light — but they're also for all of kids and families, normatively gendered or otherwise, so that we can be better allies and more thoughtful when it comes to gender expectations. Hopefully then, a better generation of children can be raised up, one that sees the beauty in diversity and champions inclusion and kindness. bp

HOW PRINT HEALS

Women and trans creators are healing with zines, and making some kick-ass work in the process

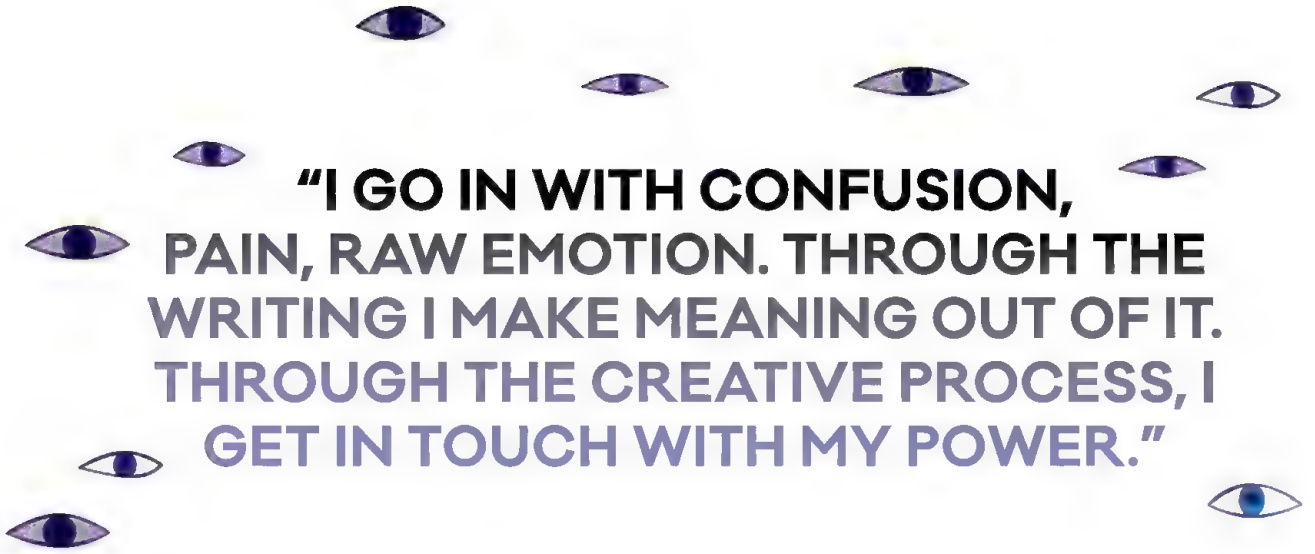
by Lauren Kirshner

IN 2009, DANI ABRAM, an animator and comic creator from the U.K., began getting stomach pains. She changed her diet, quit the gym, ate more, and so did the aching that something was very wrong. At work, she became [illegible] and [illegible] her creativity. One day she bolted from a grocery store, convinced the [illegible] make a scene. Soon Abram's doctor, who couldn't [illegible] began keeping a diary. That diary would eventually [illegible] Worry Wart, a comic about living with [illegible] and [illegible].

Comics like Abram's, [illegible] personal narratives, [illegible] for women to tell their stories about anxiety, depression, trauma, and [illegible]. For creators, making and sharing [illegible] an empowering sense of processing mental [illegible] lacking [illegible] and create [illegible]. For readers, these works are [illegible] that [illegible] who are [illegible], compelling, [illegible] and sometimes [illegible] [illegible] mental health issues, and an important reminder that [illegible].

Before making art [illegible], Abram was married to her [illegible]. "I didn't want to tell [illegible] or my boyfriend at the time, for fear they wouldn't believe me or that it would be [illegible]. I'd [illegible] told me to [illegible]. "I'd believe me. I don't [illegible] in the world."

"[illegible] mental illness is [illegible] [illegible] high, but many still [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] real fear of being labeled. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



"I GO IN WITH CONFUSION, PAIN, RAW EMOTION. THROUGH THE WRITING I MAKE MEANING OUT OF IT. THROUGH THE CREATIVE PROCESS, I GET IN TOUCH WITH MY POWER."

through the writing I make meaning out of it," Morrigan explains. "Through the creative process, I get in touch with my power."

Zine and comic making, reading, and sharing are also ways for women to form communities of mutual support on the basis of shared struggle. Zines, with their handmade traces of their authors' lives, are intrinsically intimate; so too are the distribution channels, which privilege author to reader connections. Creators form networks with other creators, and readers, both online and offline, and develop solidarities. This process overturns the traditional division between authors and readers, and who rarely interact on this personal of a level.

Sharing one's story with others who have gone through similar experiences can also reduce feelings of isolation. Quinn Rivenburgh, a Chicago-based artist and art therapist, has seen this many times firsthand. "Sharing your story can be a profoundly humanizing experience," they told me by email. "I've seen this happen in a group therapy setting, where female-identified people drew comics about their experiences of sexual violence — and to each comic shared, there was a resounding chorus of 'me too' from other group members."

Lina Wu, author of the zine *For Girls Who Cry Often*, concurs. "Even if it seems too personal or embarrassing, I think that if you are writing something honest, people will understand. If you allow yourself to be vulnerable in it, people will identify with that."

Abram continues to get letters from people who tell her that her comic made them feel less alone. "I sometimes feel like a secret warrior, part of a worldwide crew of anxiety fighters lifting each other up in small but significant ways," she says.

At the same time, if disclosing one's struggles feels too risky, the physical form of comics and zines can offer creators a degree of privacy and control. Creators can, and often do, write under a pen name; control the number of copies they produce; choose where the zine gets distributed; and, to an extent, to whom. In her classic book *Girl Zines*, the late Alison Piepmeier argued that the physical form of a print zine or comic helps to protect makers from misogynistic comments that are more likely to be left on a blog than sent through snail mail. For those who don't want the 24/7 exposure the internet entails, physical zines and comics offer a compromise between privacy and self-disclosure. As Jenna Worth put it, "producing zines can offer an unexpected respite from the scrutiny on the internet, which can be as oppressive as it is liberating."

Of course, many creators intentionally place their work online to find larger audiences. Today, zines can be bought on Amazon and Etsy while publications that started as zines, like *Bust* and *Bitch*, have followings in the five digits. Some DIY comics are also crossing over into mainstream publishing. Allie Brosh's webcomic, *Hyperbole and a Half*, which detailed her experiences with depression, was published as a book by Simon and Schuster. Dani Abram recently published her comic in book form as well.

This round-up offers a very brief glimpse into the rich world of comics and zines about mental health issues. If you read just one, you will be led to many others. By writing and drawing out (literally and figuratively) difficult stories, these creators offer sincere and courageous disclosures, stories that are by-products of pain, and necessary reading. They use art to lay claim and own a reality that is often impossible to talk about in everyday life. bp

Want more recommendations of zines by women and trans folks dealing with issues of mental health? Head to ***brokenpencil.com/news/mental-health-zines*** *for an expanded version of this article!*

DEPRESSION

Hope and despair rivet the vignettes in Lina Wu's zine **For Girls Who Cry Often** (2015), which captures the melancholia of teenagehood's bandaged heartsongs, juxtaposing writings on self-harm and suicidal thoughts against a pinky palette of lovely drawings. Formally innovative, Wu constructed the narrative from survey answers she received from over a dozen teenage girls.

Sylvia's **Mania, Mania, Mania** (2014), an intrepid log of manic depression, toes the line between humour and pathos. "I lost a lot of money, cried a lot of years, and my brain now looks like a wedge of Swiss cheese because I'm addicted to drugs." Diagnosed at 15, she began making zines at the same time (during a manic phase) in the hope of connecting to other people.

Clark 8 (2003), by Megan Gendell, is an account of the author's stay at a mental hospital while a student at Columbia University. Written in deadpan prose laced with crushing poetic lines ("the world turned completely to ocean; I was without landmarks, bewildered and drowning"), this zine is lucid and powerful.

Clementine Morrigan's evocative zine, **Fucking Magic** (2015 -), which they describe as a "deep dive into childhood trauma and living with the legacy of surviving childhood sexual abuse," follows their previous zine, **Seawitch**, a tapestry-rich compendium of poetic and raw narratives about, among other things, survival and scars. Both are powerful.

Anatomical Heart (2008), by Bettie reflects on depression, hospitals, experts, and pills. Capturing the ambivalence of prescription drug therapy, she wonders if she might have "a whole other personality underneath" her medicated one. Particularly moving is the author's difficulties accessing benefits and being stigmatized as a "scrounger."

"Death is a touchy subject," opens **The Worst: A Compilation Zine on Grief and Loss** (2008), "and I have found very few people for whom discussing or thinking about grief or loss is easy or enjoyable." What true words these are. Edited by Kathleen, this zine intelligently captures how grief and depression "trigger and magnify one another."

ANXIETY

Worry Wart (2014), a comic by Dani Abram, gutsily presents the anxiety disorder that eventually reduced Abrams' life to a mouse-hole of avoidance and isolation. Abrams' frank depictions of her gastrointestinal upsets, brief amour with pills, and eventual recovery, combine to make a tonic for anyone's who's been there.

Anxiety Comics (2015-) by Stacy Brur is a zippy, funny, and deeply felt series about the author's experiences with a pervasive anxiety disorder. It captures the negative thinking spirals of anxiety pitch perfectly, toeing the line between hilarious and poignant.

Breakfast at Twilight: A Personal History (2003-2007), a fierce perzine by Erica S., is about severe obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). It tackles the often-overlooked connection between precarity and mental health. When Erica was precariously and unhappily employed, her condition worsened; when she secured a job she enjoyed, she became healthier.

What's Your Damage (2014) is a zine of quotations collected by Deirdre Prudence while working in a psychiatric ward. This zine's sense of humour is complemented by its compelling design that includes acetate pages, vintage library card envelopes, buttons, and images.

EATING DISORDERS

Diary Entries from my Eating Disorders (2013), by Sofie Mikhaylova, explores anorexia's symptoms of striving, fear and shame that eventually become a stand-in for identity. In plainspoken, piercing prose, Mikhaylova catalogues the obsessive eating rituals simpering beneath the mask of a happy life (like going online to read the Montana's menu before dinner, to find the lowest calorie item) on her quest for "xylophone ribs."

The Insatiable Cunt (2003), by B.N.R., meditates on the inner voices that fuel an eating disorder, imperatives like "it is better to be thin than to be healthy." B.N.R. poignantly captures the claustrophobia and false stability of an ED. B.N.R writes about the deranged roller coaster that is anorexia and how, despite its promise to deliver happiness, it never lets the rider off even after the "goal" is reached. "I never saw a way out," they write.

The Barf Zine (2013) is a gutsy collection of stories about eating disorders, food, the body and recovery. Innovatively, all contributors structured their essays around the same list of questions, giving the zine a tidy cohesion.

307.1 (Undated), by Valley Simone, is premised on the idea that "eating disorders are wildly misunderstood." Aiming to deromanticize and debunk glamorous myths about EDs, Simone deliberately wrote their trenchant zine only after their recovery for fear of "romanticizing my disorder as many sui-

bp

All comix and zines mentioned in this article are available at The Toronto Zine Library, or through their authors' personal websites. Thanks to Rachel Chepesiuk at TZL for all the help in researching this piece.

In each issue, Broken Pencil *asks an artist to curate Folio — a section highlighting creators working in unexpected media and materials.*
This Folio is curated by **Ange Loft**

AANMITAAGZI creates dance, theatre and cross-disciplinary arts with both professional and community artists. Most recently they created a new interactive work for Toronto's Nuit Blanche which took place along Bay Street at the end of September. "Serpent People" is a performance and installation that carries personal narratives woven into the Indigenous regional myth about transformation after eating the black sturgeon on a particular island on Lake Nipissing. Oral history, archived research, artist reflections, and three years of hands on community development around themes of hunger, desire, shame and beauty is brought to life by co-founders, Penny Couchie and Sid Bobb with Spiderwoman Theatre's Muriel Miguel. Lead designer, Meg Paulin, and a team of emerging artists patch together a cryptic narrative skimming images and documents of land and resource dispossession, uranium mining and fish anatomy; inviting audience art-based response in an evolving reflection on over-arching theme of need.

Based out of Big Medicine Studio, Aanmitaagzi is a vital creative leader in cross-disciplinary aboriginal arts and are making big waves by providing a platform for the thriving arts community in Nipissing First Nation and North Bay.

Ange Loft is a multi-disciplinary performing artist, Associate Artistic Director of Jumblies Theatre and vocalist with Yamantaka//Sonic Titan.

GO OUT TO THE TEEPEE

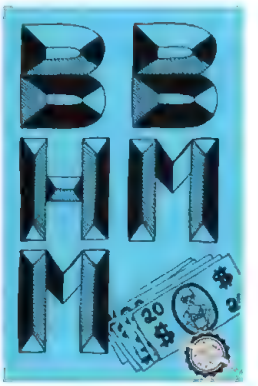
All Together: A Primer for Connecting to Place & Cultivating Ecological Citizenship

Emma Percy, epercy95@gmail.com, emmapercy.com, free

When is the last time you've considered communities you are a part of, or what local plant and animal species are indigenous to your area? When was the last time you thought about watershed boundaries? These are just a few topics *All Together* asks its reader to contemplate, and to my surprise, my answer was: never?

This is more than a zine, it is a learning object that asks you to consider your relationship to your environment and to cultivate possibilities for ecological citizenship. Artist Emma Percy asks readers to consider the invisible systems that bring us our food. I was surprised how little I think about the environment. For example, I have never considered whether the land in Toronto consists of mostly clay, peat, sad, or silt, its pH or nutrient levels, or what our typical annual rainfall is. Normally, I feel like high-fiving myself just for going to the local farmers market. *All Together* challenges us to strive for more.

I applaud the goal of encouraging a more educated and invested public who will be motivated to exercise their ecological citizenship toward fighting the forces behind climate change. I would also recommend this for educators. Never hectoring, patronizing, or boring, I found this zine totally engaging. Bonus points for the snappy looking cut-and-paste layout and typewritten text. (Chris Landry)



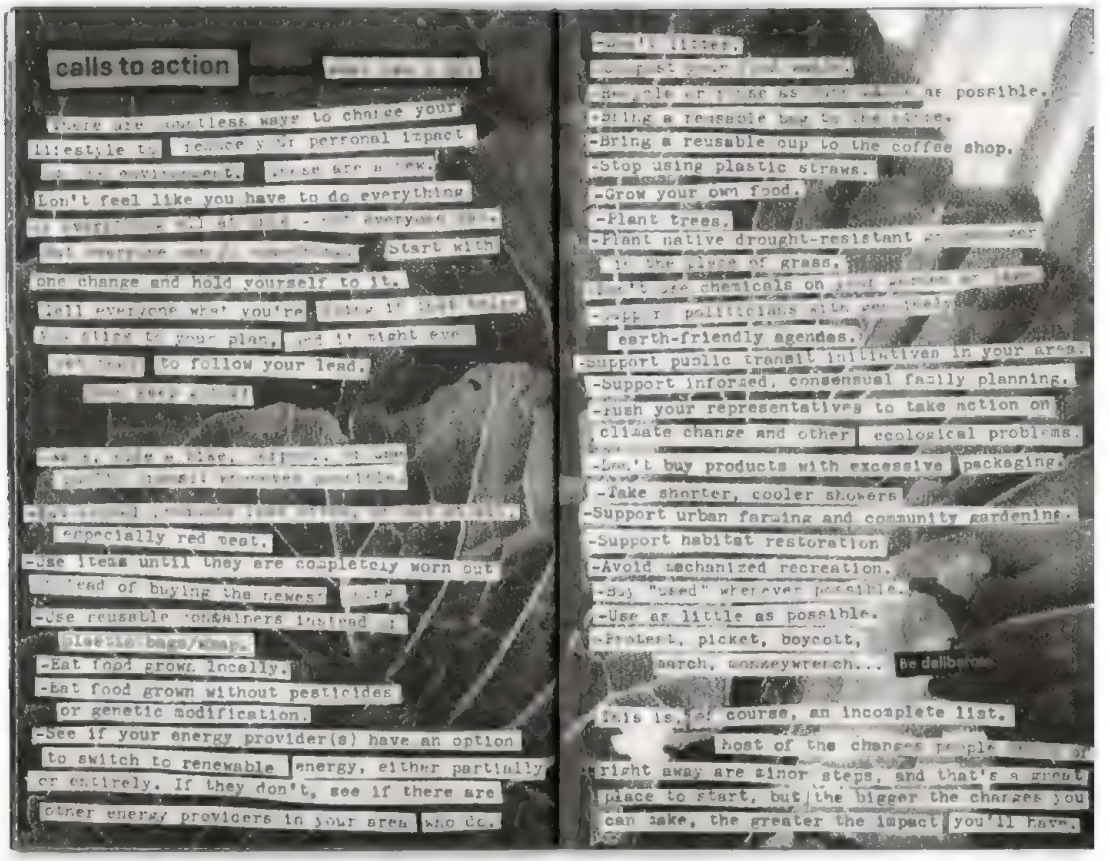
BBHMM

Zine, Henrika Larochelle and Genevieve Darling, 16 pgs, $5, @notorious_b.a.e.

With a name based off of Rihanna's bumping, never-stale summer jam, this zine has a lot to live up to — and it does not disappoint! *BBHMM* is a best practices guide for

EXCERPT

FROM **All Together** BY **Emma Percy**


calls to action
Start with
one change and hold yourself to it.
to follow your lead.
especially red meat.
-Use items until they are completely worn out
-Eat food grown locally.
-Eat food grown without pesticides
or genetic modification.
-See if your energy provider(s) have an option
to switch to renewable energy, either partially
or entirely. If they don't, see if there are
-Stop using plastic straws.
-Grow your own food.
-Plant trees.
earth-friendly agendas.
-Support public transit initiatives in your area.
-Support informed, consensual family planning.
-Support urban farming and community gardening.
-Support habitat restoration
-Use as little as possible.
This is, of course, an incomplete list.
right away are minor steps, and that's a great
place to start, but the bigger the changes you
can make, the greater the impact you'll have.

strippers and other adult entertainers, mainly aimed at beginners, from the perspective of Henrika, a queer Black feminist in Montreal. This truly is a how-to zine. It lists things you'll need, financial advice, examples of the potential trials one may face with clients, and insight from experienced dancers make up the majority of the zine.

But this practical information is written in a friendly, informal tone, full of humour and character. Most importantly, it's accessibly written and easy to understand, elevated by the excellent illustrations and design by Genevieve Darling. Henrika is honest about the fact that while she has found success, power, and insight as a dancer, there are plenty of downfalls to the game, including cultural stigma, shitty clients, and less than ideal drug and alcohol use by clients and dancers. Still, I deeply appreciate the objectivity and clarity with which Henrika describes strip club life, and most importantly the intersectional approach she takes, bringing added nuance as a women of colour in the biz.

Ultimately, *BBHMM* is a reminder of just how important zines can be as how-to and DIY tools shared amongst peers. The advice here directly empowers to the reader to make smart and perhaps very profitable decisions about dancing, and it all comes packaged in a sweet and sharply illustrated package. (Jonathan Valelly)

The BLT

Zine, The Belmont Library Teens, Issue #1, 36 pgs, SCML.org

Belmont is a city of approximately 27,000 folks, located between San Francisco and San Jose in northern California. In this in-between city, there are some teens who have come together to create a zine — cool, right? That zine is *this* zine, it's called *The BLT,* and it's pretty (darn) fun.

There are 17 contributors in total, and as you can imagine with 17 teenagers trying to come together to do anything, the result is kind of chaotic, kind of adventurous, but never dull, and never predictable. There are some drawings, some poetry, hot takes, thought pieces, miniature obituaries (to Alan Rickman, amongst others) and other bits and pieces of prose and stray thoughts. The presentation is actually fairly consistent, and this zine looks pretty slick, which is great, because the design cauterizes any rough edges that might be found within. What makes this zine unique is that it's actually produced under the imprint (or supervision, at least) of the Belmont Library. Thus, assumedly, adults with a love for reading and the arts supplied encouragement and nurtured the project. That's important from a growth perspective, and also, it's kind of great to see young people unplug for a bit and focus on creating a hard copy "something". In this case, the "something" is solid. (Cam Gordon)

The Downtown Eastside Women's Art Collective

Mixed media zine, edited by Jessica Todd, Jenn McDermid and Hanna Fazio, Issue #2, eastsideartscollective.wordpress.com

In the realm of objecthood and zines, DEWAC's collection of art and poetry stands out. It's not because it boasts left-of-centre design or makes some deft moves with a pair of scissors and some materials. It's simply because it is a sleekly produced zine with glossy pages showing off the vibrant colours of the artwork oh-so-well.

This is important, because the Vancouver-based DEWAC is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization that clearly cares about empowering the women and non-binary artists who access its spaces. The featured work comes out of a biweekly workshop, and efforts are made to sell each piece, with all profits going to the artists. The zine's polish attests to an eye for quality that offers something a little elevated. It is also likely meant to encourage these artists to see themselves as exactly that: artists, who are published, catalogued and exhibited.

The work itself is a range of dynamic pieces. Deirdre Keohane's oil portrait of Irish Revolutionary Nationalist Constance Markievicz captures the weariness and determination of an activist who claimed to do very little, yet was the first woman to be elected to the British House of Commons. Selina K. Barton's simple rhyming schemes betray complex and bittersweet emotions in the poem "Happy Aboriginal Day": "Song + dance as we should / Laugh + joke if we could." Theresa Ng's collage of fashion magazine cut-outs play with multiple meanings, as a hairdryer can be read as a gun pointing at the temple of a self-conscious young model.

Alongside the diversity of styles, the zine captures the diversity of artists who make Vancouver's Downtown Eastside their home. Short bios provide a snapshot of creativity and resilience coming out of a neighbourhood that is more often than not reduced to stereotypes about poverty and crime. (I. Rattan)

The Happy Loner

Zine, Izalixe Straightheart, 16 pgs, $3 TheHappyLoner.weebly.com, ZinesByIza@gmail.com

Izalixe Straightheart lives in Quebec City, in a cove by a river. She also handcrafts a zine called *The Happy Loner* that

is a hyper-localized document of assorted drama, dramas, and micro-dramas.

I use all three of those terms in a 100% non-pejorative fashion. The beauty of *The Happy Loner* is that it overshares in a way that isn't glib, attention-starved, boastful, or falsely modest. Instead, it's honest, engaging, thoughtful and self-aware. This is very much one of those "I feel like I'm reading their diary" zines, and Izalixe comes off as entirely likable, and totally like somebody who would be a helluva lot of fun to hang out and crack wise with. This is ironic, because the zine is about being (largely) a loner, and while it's not like Izalixe doesn't mention friends and socialization and the like, the zine really does focus in large part about various adventures in solitude.

My favourite part of this zine may be the taxicabs section, a unique and yet very relatable set of anecdotes about taxi usage, drivers, fair fares, and some unfair stuff. This, and pretty much everything else in this zine, is brave and smart and well worth reading. Basically, it's what a perzine should be, or at least aspire to be. (Cam Gordon)

Here's What I've Hidden Under My Tongue

#4, perzine, D.J.T., 3701 Richmond Ave. #20 Anchorage, AK 99508

Am I crazy? Maybe that's a question you've never had to ask yourself, but it's a

EXCERPT

FROM **Happy Loner** BY **Izalixe Straightheart**

Adventures in Taxicabs

i dont know if you're like me, but there are certain things that, because i never really took the habit of doing them, still feel kinda weird when i do.

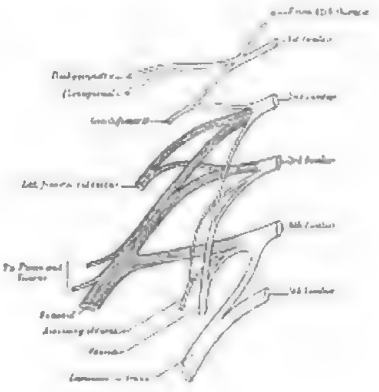
Like, i'm sure there are families out there that do order pizza & chinese food & fried chicken to be delivered home for dinner, but at my house, that never, ever happened. Every meal was a home-cooked one (usually steak & potatoes) and ordering delivery would've been considered an incredibly eccentric frivolity. That's why i was so delighted to do it when my dad would leave for Florida for a whole month, leaving my teenage self free to order away (and gosh, do my own grocery! actually PICK whatever i wanted to eat!) and play music videos at max volume all night long. The forbidden aspect of those things made them even more attractive because of their rarity.

Hell, it still kinda feels a bit like this to me to order delivery, or room service in a hotel, even if i've been an adult & had my own apartments for years & done it times & times again.

One of these things that i never did was to take cabs in my hometown. Yeah, i'd take taxis when i was traveling - to and from airports, train stations, or unknown, faraway locations i had to get to in a strange city. But at home, i walk or take the city bus. Up until this winter, the use of a taxicab was akin to me to throwing a whole lot of money to the wind... why would i pay 20$ to get somewhere when the bus is 3$ and i can perfectly walk the rest of the way... right?

That was until i threw my back out.

It happened the day after Donald Trump's election (I kid you not). I had been to the grocery store with the bus (may i remind you, i live in a cove by a river so, even though i am in an urban area and a ferry ride away from a major city, getting anywhere from my house includes walking 10 minutes to and fro, to get anywhere. Then, i can take the bus or ferry to my destination, but i have no direct stop at my doorstep, & that's usually not a problem.

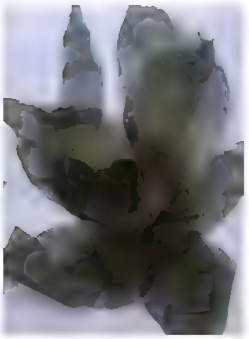


question that D.J.T. — and anyone who has had an experience of being in children's psychiatric care — has.

In the fourth edition of *Here's What I've Hidden Under My Tongue*, an adult D.J.T. has chosen to work in a children's hospital. They have to take a trip back to D.C. for professional development, and it just so happens that the conference will take place in the very same hospital where, they were locked up as a child.

You can say a lot about what child psychiatric care is or isn't. D.J.T. points out that above all, it is defining. It has the power to say something about who you are. Adding the fact that children are still in the process of discovering who they are, and still putting together what their personality is, you've got a potentially dangerous mix.

D.J.T. on some level knows that they are mentally healthy. They have gone to Harvard, hold a steady job, and I'm pretty sure their psychiatrist, Sarah, is in love with them. But on the other hand, D.J.T. sees the kids on the other side of the glass of their former prison and says "Those are my people." D.J.T. isn't wrong. No matter what side of the glass you're on, if you've got a brain, conversations about mental health are for you. The more we destigmatize it, the closer we can get to reinventing these systems that would make anyone feel crazy. (dustan j. hlady)



Honeymoon

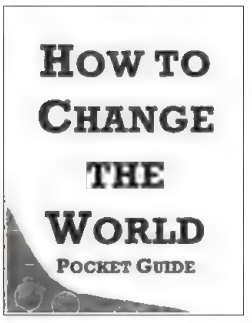
Travel zine, Heather Joan Tam, 19 pgs
heatherjoantam.com

For Heather Joan Tam's honeymoon (or perhaps, that of her protagonist, if this is fiction), she travelled to England where her new in-laws live, since they were unable to make their son's wedding. I expected the zine to be more personal, given the nature of the trip, and the fact that travel stories do tend to focus on the person telling it. *Honeymoon* is anything but personal.

In every moment or place, Tam makes herself the most insignificant factor in the space. While washing dishes at her new in-law's home, you might think she'd mention her thoughts about getting married, or the personal ramifications of having your in-laws along for your honeymoon. Instead, she talks about the tap's water pressure, and then for three pages describes the history of flood management structures in the area. She continually makes herself smaller in the zine's pages to make room for the weight of history and infrastructure.

This type of writing is a welcome aberration from the highly personal, perhaps self-indulgent projects that make up a good slice of zine culture. Maybe Tam is onto something. Maybe when we are washing dishes, visiting caves, or embarking on life-changing unions, we as individuals are still not the most significant aspect of everything we are experiencing.

The next time you take a bath, think about where the water comes from, where it goes, where your towel was made, who lived in that house before you and who walked through that area before a house was there. Then think about the last stupid argument you had or the last piece of gossip you passed along. If you do, you might have the same experience astronauts have when looking down on Earth and maybe, just maybe you will be able to tap into the mindful perspective that Tam has cultivated in this zine. (dustan j. hlady)



How to Change the World: Pocket Guide

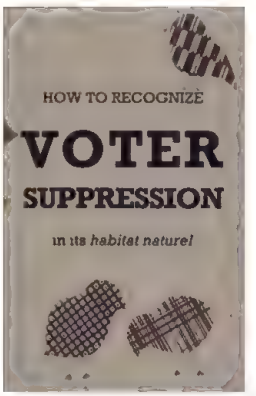
Zine, Bronwyn Mauldin, 16 pgs,
Bronwynmauldin.com, @guerrillareads

It's almost quaint that a quasi-prophet offering pointers for salvaging the planet does so in print and not online, where it might reach more readers. I suppose if one is serious about staving off certain doom for humanity, it's probably not a bad concept to make readers work for it a bit (and guard against a Y2K-ish full cyber meltdown).

Bronwyn Mauldin has taken up the cause, and she brings the positivity ... SO. .. HARD! In general, her zine veers towards political or cultural changes, but there's a universality in play here that is likely squishy enough to be applied to anything with a specific outcome.

The model is sequential and stark, focused on absolutes rather than vague platitudes. No spoilers here, but in the abstract, a lot of who, what, where, when, and why type questions are posed as directional signage, steering the process and keeping focus clean. The zine also features a few bonus "pro tips" and a request for the zine to be "remixed, transformed or built upon" in any way by the reader.

So yeah, this is an open source exercise, rooted in realism and some kind words of encouragement. It's a start, and I can't see anybody not benefiting from the small mental jolt this zine could well provide. (Cam Gordon)



How to Recognize Voter Suppression in its Habitat Naturel

zine, Bronwyn Mauldin,
bronwynmauldin.com , $7

It's safe to say that in 2017, fair and equal representation at the ballot box is a must. Politicians have long used different methods to stop people opposed to their policies from exercising their right to vote,

and all of those are well covered here: voter ID laws, purging voter rolls, and cutting funding to election agencies.

Although this is an American zine, many of these details will sound too familiar to anyone who remembers Canada's Fair Elections Act (also known as Bill C-23, also known as the bill introduced by the Conservative Party of Canada to make it harder for students and individuals without driver's licenses to vote). Remember when the Conservatives stripped Elections Canada of the power to promote voter turnout? These things were not front-page news, but there was an insidious effort on the part of the government of the day to make it harder for folks to exercise their democratic right, justified by dubious claims of voter fraud.

To be honest, I found the US-specific information just as interesting. The infographic on the Electoral College demonstrates how the relative power of one voter from Wyoming is equal to that of 3.7 Florida voters. Wow. Bonus: This short booklet is released on a Creative Commons license, which allows for redistribution for non-profit purposes. (Chris Landry)

Magellan & Magellan: Mutiny

Zines, Jessica Tremblay, jessicatremblay.ca

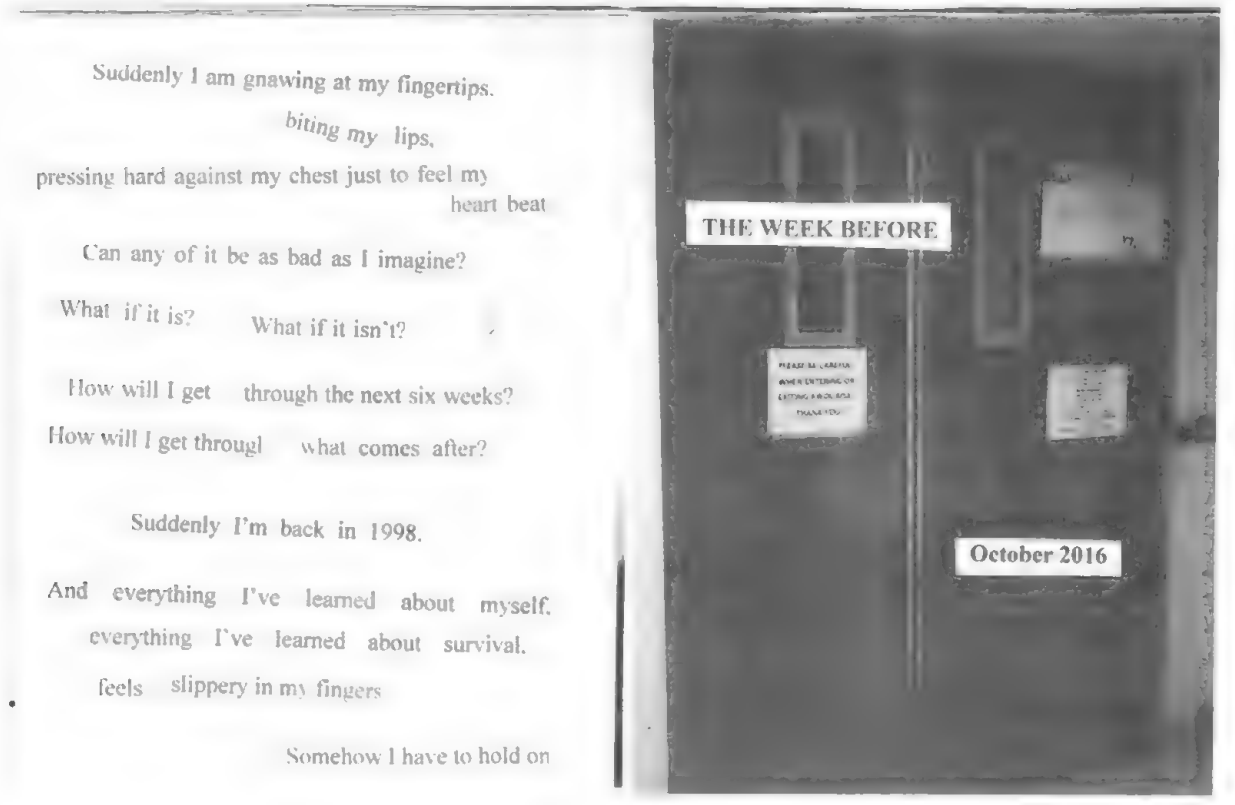
In honour of having led the first expedition to successfully circumnavigate the globe, 16th-century explorer Ferdinand Magellan has had many things named after him: two dwarf galaxies, a crater on Mars, an entire sea route, and a penguin. His exploits could fill volumes. Jessica Tremblay manages to get them down on eight pages over two issues of this zine.

Her zines collect images and text from Ian Cameron's 1973 history, *Magellan and the First Circumnavigation of the World*. Judging from the excerpts Tremblay includes, Cameron clearly told Magellan's story with dramatic flair. You're going to have to know a little something about Magellan for these zines' disjointed quotes to make sense. But if you don't, you can still enjoy the language, which easily conjures up imagery of bloody ship battles, stowaways and mutiny.

Tremblay asserts her authorship by making clever juxtapositions between image and text. Sure, she didn't "write" any of this, but she compiled it in her own idiosyncratic way. The text, "the duplicity of

EXCERPT

FROM **Here's What I've Hidden Under My Tongue**


Suddenly I am gnawing at my fingertips.
biting my lips,
pressing hard against my chest just to feel my
heart beat
Can any of it be as bad as I imagine?
What if it is?
What if it isn't?
How will I get
through the next six weeks?
How will I get through
what comes after?
Suddenly I'm back in 1998.
And everything I've learned about myself,
everything I've learned about survival,
feels slippery in my fingers
Somehow I have to hold on
THE WEEK BEFORE
October 2016

the Spaniards seems to have taken him by surprise," is paired with an image of a man, possibly Magellan, clubbing an unsuspecting penguin provides a nice tongue-in-cheek joke. Possibly, it also makes social commentary on exactly how Magellan went about "discovering" the penguins that now carry his name. (I. Rattan)

Meme Queen

zine, Kyle Bridgett and friends, 16 pgs

Meme Queen is totally out there and a major WTF. It kinda "reads" more like a Tumblr profile, layered with all sorts of weirdness and scary drawings and collage art and the like. There is basically zero central narrative or focus. In lieu of those, we get a half dozen or so contributors, each playing "one upper" to each other, tossing bits of art and imagery into the mix.

You could judge this zine using the classic "mosaic versus melting pot" argument that's sometime applied to cultures and society. In this instance, it's more of a melting pot, albeit one that was dropped with disparate ingredients splurged about, mixing with grime and goo and other bits of random matter. The "Types of Penguins" chart is a highlight. The little guys look pretty cute, especially when they're trying to appear all rough n' tumble by dressing like Vikings or gunslingers.

It all doesn't make sense, and that's okay, because *Meme Queen* is (I think) a celebration of people coming together and squishing their respective bits of quick, easy art into a singular work. It's a triumph of collaboration, and you'd probably dig it if you like your zines loose and off-the-cuff. Otherwise, this might just be too messy to make the effort to read. (Cam Gordon)

Quitter: Good Luck Not Dying

Zine, Trace Ramsey, 64 pgs, Pioneers Press, pioneerspress.com, $6

Trace Ramsey's *Quitter* zine is still being produced — in defiance of its name — 12 years after it started. *Good Luck Not Dying* collects the first six editions in a quarter-size paperback.

With several issues side by side, it's easy to see how both the zine and Ramsey's writing evolved over the better part of a decade. Self-deprecation ran rampant in the beginning. He even calls himself a "prick of misery" at one point. The use of unnecessarily complicated language went unchecked as well: as he shuffles through a line-up for a pretzel, his blood-sugar low, he describes his "knee generators" starting, his legs filled with "weak blood picking up the tailings of diminishing pancreas secretions."

Quitter is typically part manifesto and part memoir (and always high on melodrama). Issues 1–6 saw Ramsey repeatedly rail against The Man, capitalism, factory farming — the usual suspects. He decried the loss of honeybees and wetlands. The pointed angst was likely appropriate for the time in which it was written, but today we're overloaded with such sentiments (as necessary as they are).

It's as a memoirist that Ramsey really shines as a writer, and the protest starts to give way to this side of his writing as the issues progress. His prose also loses much of its pretentiousness, as well, when he's lost in reverie. Amidst all the grave topics he tackles in these zines, his most poignant essay is about penis doodles and a second-grade fistfight. (Scott Bryson)

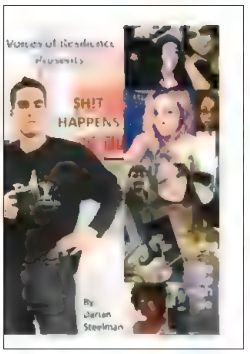
Raw: Who are You to Tell Me Who I Am

Poetry Zine, Mirae Lee & Amy Wang, 27 pgs, Issue 1, issuu.com/rawzine, $5

In their short introduction to this inaugural issue, Mirae Lee and Amy Wang ask "Who holds authority over narratives about my identity? Am I who I decide to be, or am I what the world perceives me as? How do I reconcile the different, sometimes conflicting, sides of my personality as a complex human being?" In the nine free-verse poems that follow, they aim to answer these questions, "reclaiming our sense of self and autonomy."

Raw's first issue, then, is a selection of affirmation poetry, and it is often a little too clunky to allow its reader to escape unscathed. Wang's "Starving for meaning," for instance, begins when her speaker's optometrist wonders aloud why anyone would decide to be a poet. It ends with the platitudinous, "Sir, I think my vision's just fine. / I can see crystal clear through the buzz of our hive mind / Earth is just a one-time experience / so heck, I'm going to make this mine." This selection is fairly representative of the content taken altogether. It certainly comes from a good place, and explores interesting questions, but too often it mixes its metaphors, running over tired truisms in halting verse.

The style and grace with which the zine presents these narratives, however, is refreshingly clean. Wang's design work is superb, and Lee's seven illustrations, interspersed evenly throughout the content, fit the tone and approach to this potentially-heavy subject matter with a delicate touch. The zine is well put together, and I will — simply by virtue of the zine's visual-material quality — keep an eye out for subsequent work by these creators. (Joel W. Vaughan)



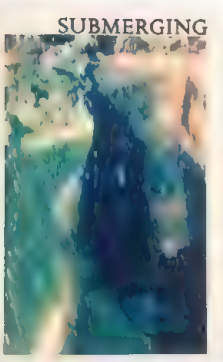
Sh!t Happens

Perzine, Darian Steelman, Voices of Resilience Presents, rayinc.ca

Darian Steelman: chronic underachiever, or perpetually unlucky people person? It depends on how you look at it. Steelman takes us on the rocky road from his teenage years to his early 20s in this zine, the result of a youth zine workshop in Winnipeg. Along the way, his income and living situation are in flux. Even though the zine ends with him in a stable place, you get the impression that "stability" in his life is only a short break amidst a life of otherwise consistent instability.

A strong motif throughout this memoir is the people that Darian meets along the way. To point, the cover of the zine is made up of a collage of all the people mentioned in the zine. His favourite type of person is, pretty clearly, single girls his age. By no means is this zine a Tucker Max-esque sex romp, but time is measured by young women in this narrative, giving Darian his sense of meaning and belonging.

I've spent a fair amount of my life afraid of becoming poorer than I've always been, so I appreciate Darian's narrative. He couch surfs, lives in a homeless shelter, or is a recipient of social housing for much of this story. Not only does this make for entertaining reading, he clearly shows that as unstable as his life might be, it is still essentially good and worthwhile. It's a life full of people, laughter, nerd culture, friends and — did I mention? — women. (dustan j. hlady)



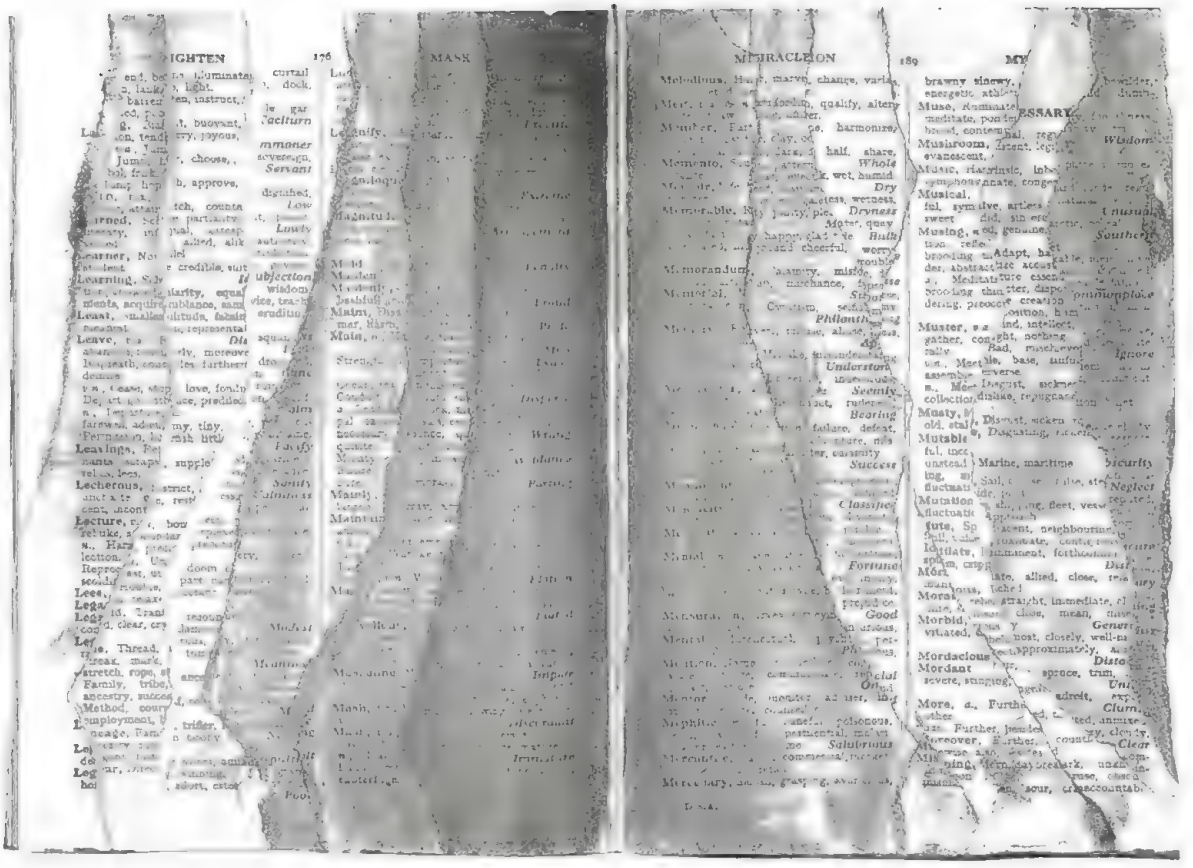
Submerging

Perzine, ed. Brian Cogan, Brett Essler, Mike Faloon and Brendan Kiernan, Issue #2, Razorcake, $3

When I've raised the topic of physical illness and mental health with friends, reactions have ranged from general

EXCERPT

FROM **Meme Queen** BY **Kyle Bridgett and friends**



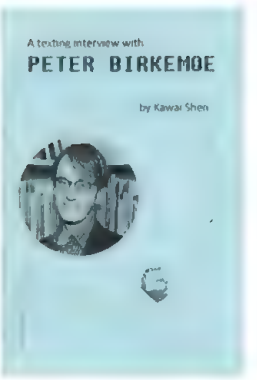
discomfort to assurances of future well-being. Often, I end up feeling misunderstood. PSA's have long said, "There's no wrong way to talk to your [insert loved one/s] about [insert difficult topic]," but my lack of clarity begs to differ.

The second issue of *Submerging* is made up of personal essays that lack clarity. They're up-close snapshots of the fragility of body and mind. So up-close, in fact, that the essayists don't immediately zoom out to situate you in explanations of the conditions discussed. Rather, you're left to wade through the experience of how each condition feels. This is the collection's strength: it submerges you.

Those explanations, clinical or otherwise, don't come until the midway point of many of the essays. In "January 21, 2017," after a diatribe on Trump and missing the Women's March, Matt Lang draws parallels between his ADD, James Baldwin and America. In "Memento," Brian Cogen describes his partner's ectopic pregnancy in the midst of long passages on the neurochemical nature of memory. By that point, these essays have already begged a second reading: a chance to pause and examine the seemingly arbitrary links between personal illness and larger issues.

The most rewarding of these is Brendan Kiernan's "Loose Ends." Each paragraph ends on an ellipsis. It's dislocating to read unfinished sentences but, in this case, form matches content: he's describing his heart attack at age 35. Here, Kiernan is saying something larger about the threat of an unfinished life.

By disregarding grammatical and even structural conventions, *Submerging*'s essays are all told in "the wrong way," which goes a long way in explaining why they're so effective in drawing you in to topics so easily misunderstood. (I. Rattan)



A texting interview with... Peter Birkemoe

Interview zine, Kawai Shen, 6 pgs, Cute Juice Comics, cutejuicecomics.com, $1

Kawai Shen continues, in this zine, her cheeky series of texting interviews, in which she offers readers a quick, casual glimpse at some of the comic-scene's most interesting characters. Encompassing just the single side of an A4 sheet of paper, folded into the

EXCERPT

FROM **A Texting Interview with Peter Birkemoe** BY **Kawai Shen**

LOL now I have to break form to ask: are you now wearing or have you ever worn Tom Ford

Because I can see it

I am working, and am careless. so no designer clothes at work. I own no Gucci as I avoid conspicuous branding

Tis a pity

On that note, back to business

Investing or profiting

Investing I plow it all back in

Wit or perversion

I guess one for the streets and the other for the sheets? Not sure which

Very witty sir

Finding God or having kids

Art as a substitute for religious experience. Employees as a substitute for kids

Perpetrator or victim

That is a strange way of asking top/bottom? Probably more of a Perp

Ah, if I wanted to ask Top or bottom, I would've asked "Top or bottom?" but you are free to answer however you wish!

But that transitions well into my next Q

classic "middle sliced" six-page zine, Shen's interviews rarely delve deeper than a typical game of "would you rather."

In the limited space given, however, Birkemoe and Shen are able to touch on the rise and fall (and subsequent rise) of Gucci, sex, comedy, finances, and "the oddest thing [Birkemoe] has ever put in [his] mouth." Spoiler: it's a sea-urchin.

Like all of Shen's little interviews, *A texting interview with... Peter Birkemoe* is bite-sized, fun, and well worth the two-minutes spent reading. They're all available online, but come with a great deal more cultural capital when purchased in their hand-folded print edition at Birkemoe's very own The Beguiling. (Joel W. Vaughan)

When Language Runs Dry

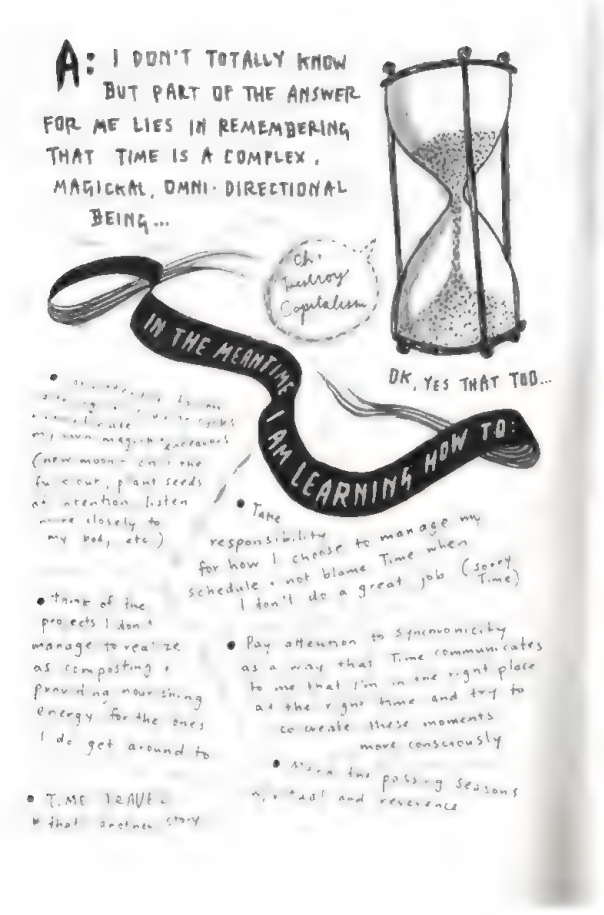
Zine, #5, Claire Barrera & Meredith Butner, 52 pgs., chronicpainzine@gmail.com, chronicpainzine.blogspot.com, nevertwice.etsy.com, $4 (US) plus postage

In their fifth issue of *When Language Runs Dry,* editors Claire and Meredith continue to validate and create space for the expression of experiences with chronic pain. As a partner to someone living with multiple sclerosis, I have appreciated this zine's work since I discovered it back on issue one. The whole run of the zine is a valuable resource for bringing into focus the complex realities of living with pain that might be invisible to the outside world. Indeed, a common theme in contributions to the zine is one of struggling to be believed — when pain is felt, but not seen, and too often dismissed by family, friends or medical professionals.

Contributions range from perzine -style memoir to poetry and comics. Nitika Raj traces the history of her endometriosis back to childhood bouts of inexplicable pain and draws connections to experiences of sexual abuse. These connections between traumas, and her subsequent role as an activist, lead her to see her pain as "a teacher guiding me towards my path." Starling offers an insightful interrogation of pain as teacher, drawing on her own

EXCERPT

FROM **When Language Runs Dry** BY **Claire Barrera & Meredith Butner**


A: I DON'T TOTALLY KNOW BUT PART OF THE ANSWER FOR ME LIES IN REMEMBERING THAT TIME IS A COMPLEX, MAGICKAL, OMNI-DIRECTIONAL BEING...
Oh hello Capitalism
IN THE MEANTIME I AM LEARNING HOW TO:
OK, YES THAT TOO...
• Take responsibility for how I choose to manage my schedule + not blame Time when I don't do a great job (sorry Time)
• Pay attention to synchronicity as a way that Time communicates to me that I'm in the right place at the right time and try to co-create these moments more consciously
• T.M.E. TRAVEL - that another story

TIME AS AN ALLY:
IT WAS THERE THE WHOLE TIME
I AM TRYING TO SHOW UP (MAKE TIME) FOR THIS NEW RELATIONSHIP... WE ARE FORGING A KIND OF SOLIDARITY.
AJA ROSE BOM '15

experience: "If the forces of life, the universe and everything are what whacks us, pain is no more the whack than it is our bodies response to that whack. And our body's response to that whack is our bodies telling us to move or somehow change."

Each piece is its own window into the possibilities of understanding one's own embodiment and being. Where on one level there is pain and obstacle, on other levels there are degrees of self-awareness, body-awareness, and world-awareness, revelations of where one is and what one needs. Clearly, the journey through chronic pain is not simple, but the way these pieces wrestle as a collection with the darkness and the deepness of it all, they add up to a beautiful affirmation. The perceptions accrued along the way — and so well-delivered in this zine — could stand to teach the world a lot about itself. (Joshua Barton)

Where I Am Where I Am Not

Rabeea Syed, Zine, 12 pgs, @rabeeasyed, $5

"You know, I support bombing Iraq because of terrorists," a customer said to Rabeea Syed after she asked if they'd like a bag. Cue the pregnant pause.

Written by Syed, a Muslim hijabi, the strength of *Where I Am Where I Am Not* lies in how Syed manages to show so much while telling very little. One section, "Things that have been said to me in Toronto," for instance, is filled with soundbites — "You're a Muslim and a feminist? That's like an oxymoron," says the parent of a child Syed babysits. "Would your dad honour kill you if you didn't wear the hijab?" a complete stranger asks — that made me want to tear my hair out, but Syed keeps her thoughts to herself. The only feeling she betrays is weariness, as her words carry the exhaustion of one who's confronted with ignorance and bigotry all too often.

Visually, the zine is well-executed, albeit aggravatingly short. The layout of its brown pages are impactful, whether they're mostly negative space or filled with black-blue embossed images of passports, letters and lands near and far. Images are at times hard to make out, but that only contributes to a feeling of unbelonging — of a difficultly with connecting to your surroundings.

Though explicit racism is on full display, there are quiet, subtle moments that for me, a child of immigrants, held extra weight:

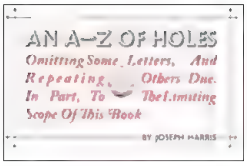
"My mom and her sisters would write back and forth after my mom moved to Canada ...

[scan of letter written in Arabic script] ...

I can't read it."

Moments like these embody the disconnect children of immigrants experience, because their bodies may appear to hail from elsewhere, but that elsewhere is not home. Whatever your background, Syed's is a zine worth picking up for its insight and heart. (Anisa Rawhani)

COMICS AND ARTZINES



An A-Z of Holes

Zine, Joseph Harris, josephbernardharris@gmail.com

Do you remember those A-Z books your parents would read to you to help you read and learn your alphabet? That's what this is, except there is a one-inch hole drilled in the middle of the book and each letter represents a type of hole.

While it might look like a children's book at first glance, I wouldn't shelf it next to *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* if I were you, unless you want your children to learn about glory holes, arseholes, or the plot holes of *50 Shades of Grey*.

I'm not sure if it's an art piece, a poem, or an ABC book for inattentive parents, but I think it works best as a coffee table conversation piece: something for your party guests to flip through for optimal WTF moments. It also can work as an educational tool if you were ever wondering about the Vaudeville actor Jonathan Hole. (dustan j. hlady)

EXCERPT

FROM **Where I Am Where I Am Not** BY **Rabeea Syed**

THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN
SAID TO ME IN TORONTO
"A MOSLEM"
"YOU'RE A MUSLIM AND A FEMINIST? THAT'S LIKE AN
OXYMORON"
"ARE YOU BALD?"
"YOU SHOULDN'T EAT OUT OR AT RESTAURANTS"
"YOU KNOW I SUPPORT BOMBING IRAQ BECAUSE OF
TERRORISTS"
THERE ARE MORE BUT I AM TIRED NOW

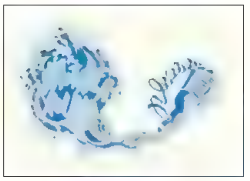
Zoo

Comic, Shayne Cassidy, 20 pgs, ShayneCassidy.com, info@ShayneCassidy.com

This zine may be a harrowing statement of the "mankind vs. nature" variety. In it, variants of humans assail or neglect variants of animals ("animols"). Pull-aparts are needed. A turtle gets fucked up real bad. And so on.

Artist Shayne Cassidy draws with pencil, gently. The illustrations have a definite softness to them that contrast with the sinister plots and subplots at work here. In fact, it seems almost *more* deranged because everything is played out to maximum subtlety. Cutesy creatures that wouldn't look out of place on a baby blanket fight back and kick much ass, albeit with some collateral damage to show for it.

That said, there's nothing graphic or particularly violent about these etchings. Even mass execution is drawn so slightly, it seems almost whimsical. Not an easy act to pull off, but Cassidy manages it in fine form. (Cam Gordon)



Another Round, Please: Confessions of a Busboy

Comic, Issue 2, Brett Martin, 24 pgs, bybrett.ca

In this part two of Brett Martin's *Confessions of a Busboy*, the talented young illustrator and comic artist channels the whirling chaos of working in a restaurant (especially at brunch!) mixed with clever observations and indictments of Toronto public culture.

Each page is sure to resonate with anyone who has ever worked in the service industry, or even spent time on a summer patio in the metropolis. But the detailed and spiracular page design and illustration style take the wits, quips, and gripes to an exciting new place, with careful hatching across clouds of imagery that follow no ground or dimension in particular. The resulting feeling is truly that of being in Martin's head, and what a place to be.

Perhaps one hilarious peak of that self awareness is in the two-page spread aptly titled "Service with a side of Smut," in which our protagonist reflects on service world encounters with online amateur (or not-so-amateur) porn stars. That's happened to all of us, right? Another fun part of the comic is the fold-out guide to bar etiquette in different countries, tucked conveniently into a little pocket at the book's centre-fold.

Martin's style is bold, reminiscent of his Toronto contemporaries Eric Kostiuk Williams and Sab Meynert, but with his own punchy flair. The two-tone risograph printing — a rich blue and a hot salmon — do just the trick. Bravo, Mr. Martin, and here's to more! (Jonathan Valelly)

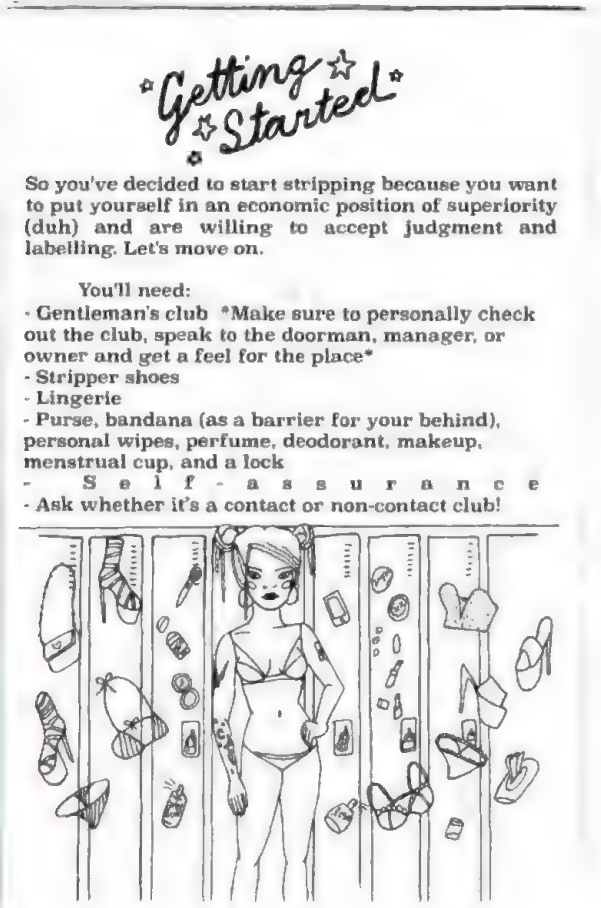
The Birth of Linda

Artzine, Tess Eneli Reid, tesseneliereid.com

The most intriguing quality of zines, that key aspect of the medium that zinesters like myself love, is the immense breadth in terms of how simple or elaborate a

EXCERPT

FROM **BBHMM** BY **Henrika Larochelle**


Getting Started
So you've decided to start stripping because you want to put yourself in an economic position of superiority (duh) and are willing to accept judgment and labelling. Let's move on.
You'll need:
- Gentleman's club *Make sure to personally check out the club, speak to the doorman, manager, or owner and get a feel for the place*
- Stripper shoes
- Lingerie
- Purse, bandana (as a barrier for your behind), personal wipes, perfume, deodorant, makeup, menstrual cup, and a lock
- S e l f - a s s u r a n c e
- Ask whether it's a contact or non-contact club!

successful zine can look. Tess Eneli Reid's *The Birth of Linda* excels at complexity, resulting in a stunning work of art that can fit in the palm of your hand.

On first glance, this zine looks like quite unassuming: two thick pieces of card sandwich some folded pages and are covered in lovely gold lettering and design. On the back cover, Reid introduces the work as "a small part of the 19,000 verse poem" telling the tale of Linda, mother of Kalevipoeg, "the titular hero of Estonia's national epic." The cover is beautiful and humble, but the most magical moment comes when you open it up and unfold an epic tale that is depicted in a visually striking, colourful, lyrical set of illustrations that speak louder than words.

The illustration style is pleasing and impressive. The quality level is what you would expect of a full-length graphic novel, yet the zine functions as a short and sweet taste of Reid's incredible talent for illustration and design. This work is meant to be proudly displayed as a modernized, historical work of art on your shelf, and to whet your appetite for Reid's aesthetic style and leave you wanting more. (Nicole Partyka)

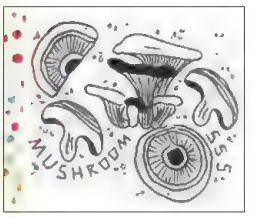
Camgirl

Art zine, Josephine Norman, johzephine.com

Some topics are easily dismissed as controversial and cause folks to speak endlessly about them, even when they don't understand what they're talking about. Josephine Norman brilliantly subverts this tendency with her tidy, deceptively simple, and beautifully designed zine entitled *Camgirl.* In it, she illustrates to the reader the life of a camgirl in hardly any words. She simply defines a camgirl as "a girl who does virtual peep shows for a living, often described as a cross between live porn and a call girl," and then allows her clients to convey the rest. The digital messages between them and herself are printed throughout the tiny folded zine, overlaid with gorgeous drawings of her body. Wrapped in a frosted vellum, this work is at once sophisticated and charming as hell.

The meaning is up to our interpretation, and for me, it reads as an act of self-confidence, and an effort to make apparent the banality and normality of a much-chagrined profession. The cover is tiled with a delightful array of sex toys and savoury snacks, providing an instant appeal and insight into the essentials in the life of a young working person — tools of the trade and burgers for sustenance.

Sex work is, for many, a loaded topic, one that elicits judgment and misunderstanding. Norman comes from a place of first-hand knowledge, and shares her adventures without shame and with a sense of humour. (Nicole Partyka)



Mushroomsss

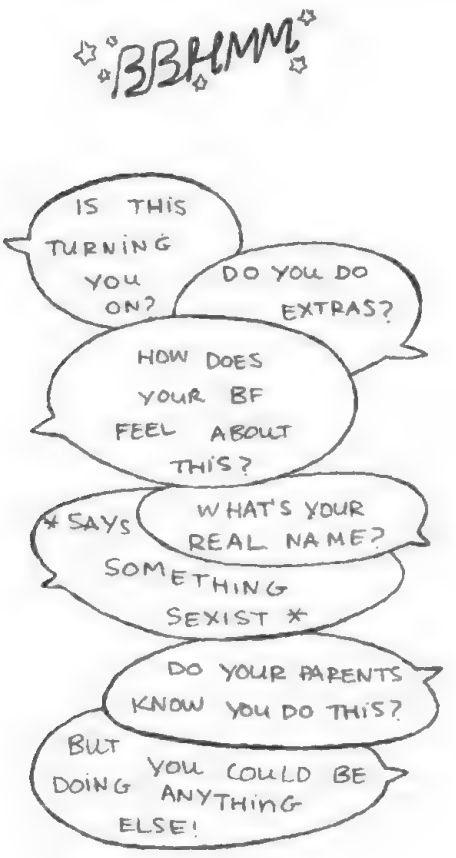
Art zine, Nattee, 8 pgs, @iamnattee, $3

I ran into Nattee at Zine Dream and picked up a few of their zines, attracted by the colourful washi tape binding and the playful linework. *Mushroomsss* is what you would expect it to be: studies of various funghi, from morels to button caps to ones that look particularly magical!

Amateur mycologists or people

EXCERPT

FROM **BBHMM** BY **Henrika Larochelle**


BBHMM
IS THIS TURNING YOU ON?
DO YOU DO EXTRAS?
HOW DOES YOUR BF FEEL ABOUT THIS?
WHAT'S YOUR REAL NAME?
* SAYS SOMETHING SEXIST *
DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW YOU DO THIS?
BUT YOU COULD BE DOING ANYTHING ELSE!

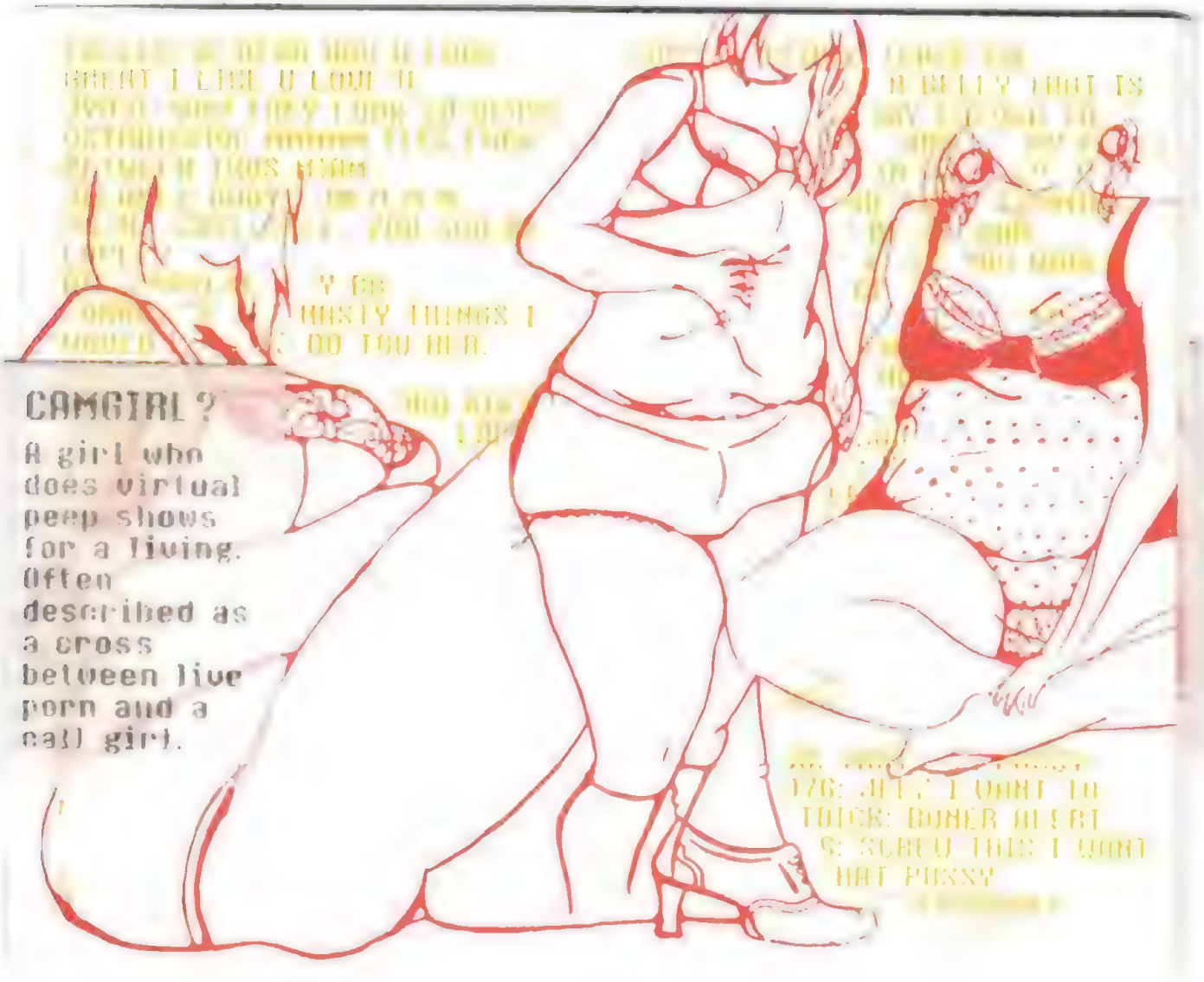
FROM **An A–Z of Holes** BY **Joseph Harris**

Jonathan Hole.

(August 13, 1904 – February 11, 1998)
American actor of vaudeville, stage, radio, television and movies.

FROM **The Birth of Linda** BY **Tess Eneli Reid**

FROM **Camgirl** BY **Josephine Norman**



searching for new tattoo ideas (Nattee does tattoos, by the way!) alike will enjoy flipping through this little black and white illustration zines. *Mushroomsss* is yet another reminder about how zines are projects where an artist can find a theme, try things out, develop a style, and make something really nice! I also quite enjoyed Nattee's plant zine, *Homegrown,* full of vines and cactii. (Jonathan Valelly)

Mixed Messages Zine

Art zine, 8 pgs, PO Box 12763, Rochester, NY, 14612

If you want to get anything out of this zine, you need to take a closer look. You can easily skim it and think you are above it all, but if you put your phone in the other room, put your kids to sleep, wait for the drugs to leave your system, and sit down and analyze each page carefully, you will get something more out of it. Don't worry, it still shouldn't take that long to get through. If you're still looking at this collage art zine, compiled with mail-in contributions by a number of creators, for more than a half hour, then you've definitely gone down a rabbit hole.

An example of the deeper meaning a close dissection of each page will bring is the first page. At the top it says "living can seem so hard and I wonder how it got to be that way." Underneath is person living under the weight of a St.-Peppers-Club type collage of what I think the artist would define as oppressive merchandise. Each piece of merchandise says something. White sugar: studies are showing that it will be the reason our children will be the first in our nation's history that will not live longer than their parents. Cotton: an allusion to slavery, maybe. Alcohol: a cancer agent, and North America's go-to escape button.

Like me, you could get the original intentions of each page wrong. Look closely. You might find something to think about. And if you do, perhaps you can use the envelop attached to the zine to send your own more-than-meets-the-eye submission. (dustan j. hlady)

Oona Moon: An Adventure (Episodes 1-8)

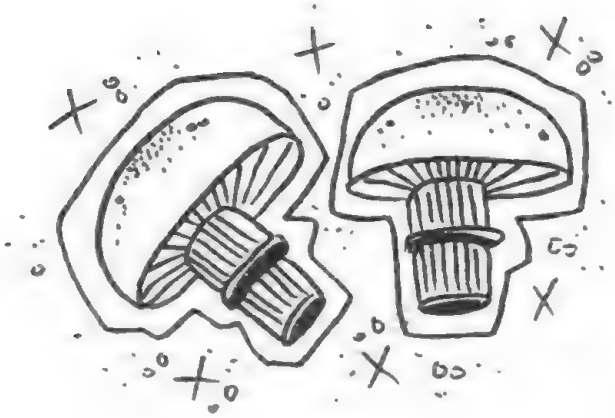
Comic, C. Vandermey, 32 pgs, caravandermey.com

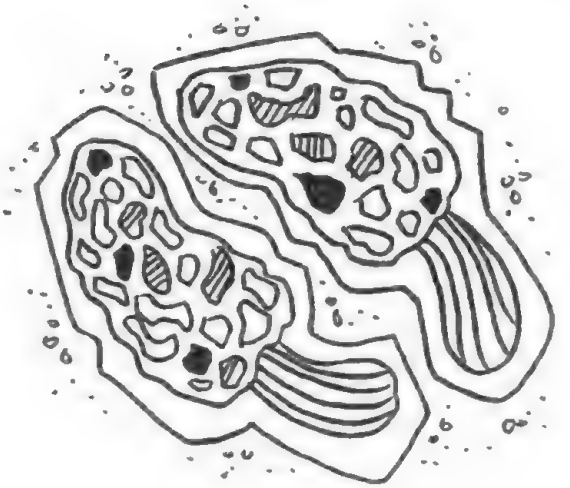
Growing up, my parents would often plop my brother and me before a television screen and share classic silent films with us. Before I was a very capable reader, I would watch stories unfold without words. This early introduction to silent films turned into a love for the form and an appreciation for storytelling that focuses attention on visuals.

Oona Moon is a science fiction heroine who finds her life disrupted when a flying object crashes into her home. Told almost entirely in black-and-white visuals, C. Vandermey's comic follows Oona on the adventure that follows the initial crash.

EXCERPT

FROM **Mushroomsss** BY **Nattee**





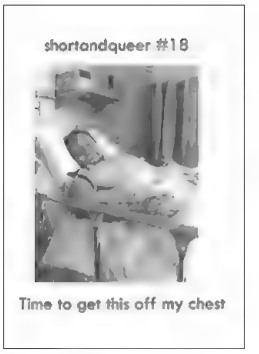
Through wonderfully drawn images, Vandermey is able to command the reader's attention while showcasing the character development of the loveable Oona Moon. Like a silent film, *Oona Moon* entertains with only the briefest use of language. *Ooona Moon: An Adventure, Episodes 1-8* ends on a cliffhanger and leaves the reader looking forward to picking up the story at episode 9. (Kim Hornak)

Prince

Art zine, Jenn Steffey, 8 pgs, jennsteffey.com, jenn@jennsteffey.com

Sources say that Prince, the late rock/pop/funk superstar, stood either 5'2" or 5'3", depending on his haircut and posture. His height was arguably the only thing in his life in short supply and also a semi-grim harbinger of this pint-sized eponymous zine. It's a zine about Prince, and as such, it features several drawings of Prince. Period. It folds into many parts, it's colourful, and it even fits into a mid-sized pocket with room to spare. Inside, you'll find some drawings of The Purple One from various points throughout his career. In some, he looks glum. In others, he's shredding on the guitar.

Artist and creator Jenn Steffey supports with her personal thoughts and memories of Prince, lifted from experience. The zine is short on content, but that's okay, because it unfolds in a pretty cool way, feeling a bit like a simpler *Chose Your Own Adventure* novel, layered with the spoiler that the dude is already dead. That's not to say this zine is morbid. It's not at all. In fact, it's full of life, colour, music and celebration. Steffey assigns time and place to certain tunes. On the whole, it's a wee 2D greatest hits package that is somewhere between street art and the liner notes on a trade-only bootleg. (Cam Gordon)



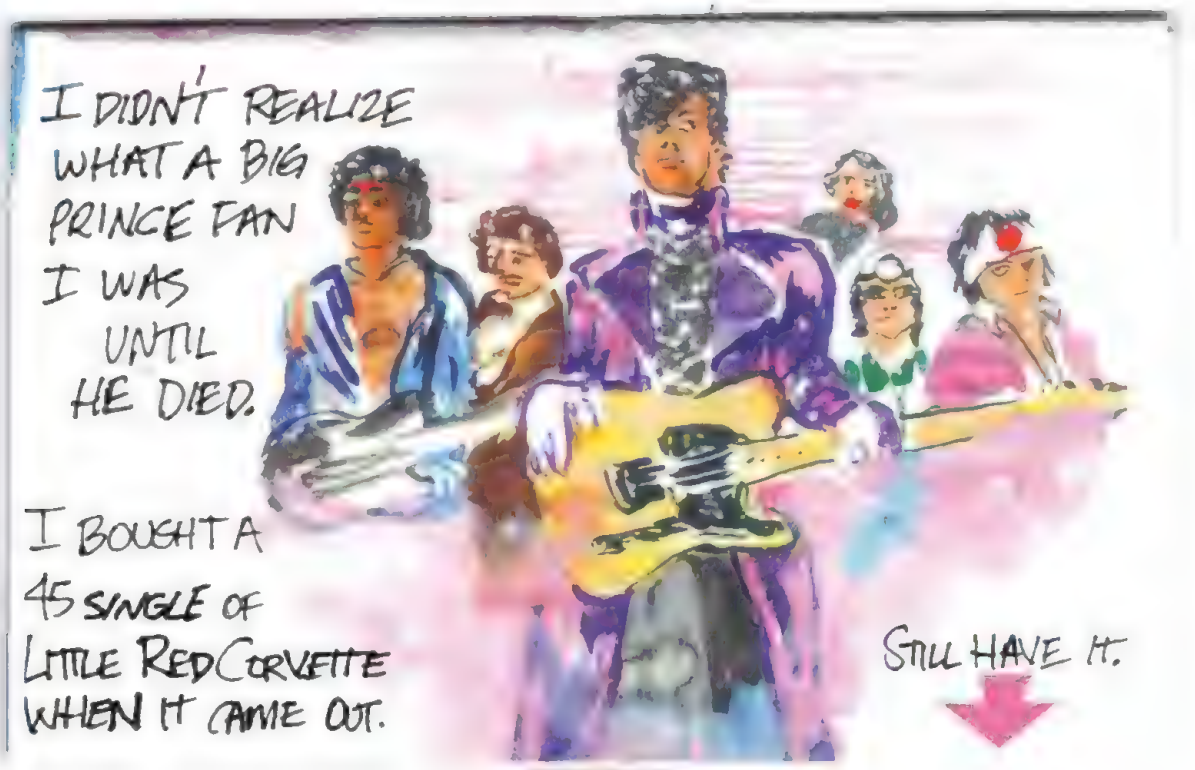
Shortandqueer:Time to get this off my chest

Perzine, Kelly Shortandqueer, issue 18, PO Box 13559, Denver, CO, 80201, $2.50

To describe Kelly Shortandqueer's experience with top surgery (chest reconstruction surgery as part of his transition from female to male) as a journey would be an understatement. There is no doubt that the decision weighed heavily on him, setting off a process of soul searching, advice-seeking, and meditation. On top of the psychological weight of deciding to undergo the procedure, there was also no shortage of practical concerns, such as choosing a physician,

EXCERPT

FROM **Prince** BY **Jenn Steffey**


I DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT A BIG PRINCE FAN I WAS UNTIL HE DIED.
I BOUGHT A 45 SINGLE OF LITTLE RED CORVETTE WHEN IT CAME OUT.
STILL HAVE IT.

asking the correct questions, insurance coverage (especially if you're American), and recovery. Kelly describes his experience with all of this with an extraordinary amount of recall. And while I found the level of detail overwhelming at times, I couldn't help but appreciate how useful this zine would be for someone going through a similar experience. Kelly is at his most lucid and insightful when contemplating his doubts, his identity in relation to his idea of how he imagines he is perceived, and uncomfortable experiences with TSA pat downs while wearing a binder.

Kelly acknowledges his share of privilege, but what really comes across is the vast and loving network of supportive friends in his life. For someone out there considering this procedure, this zine might be a wonderful substitute if they lack such an extensive social network.

Kelly's story is told chronologically in a series of dated entries. Each section features a photo of Kelly from each year of his life from age one to present. The layout appears to have been done on a computer rather than constructed by hand, so these photos really liven it up and give it a more personalized feel. I used to order this zine for the Pride Library back when I was a work-study student at Western, and I'm glad to see he's still producing it. (Chris Landry)

unproductive, now!

Comic, Helena Danghin, issue 2,
readunproductivecomics.tumblr.com

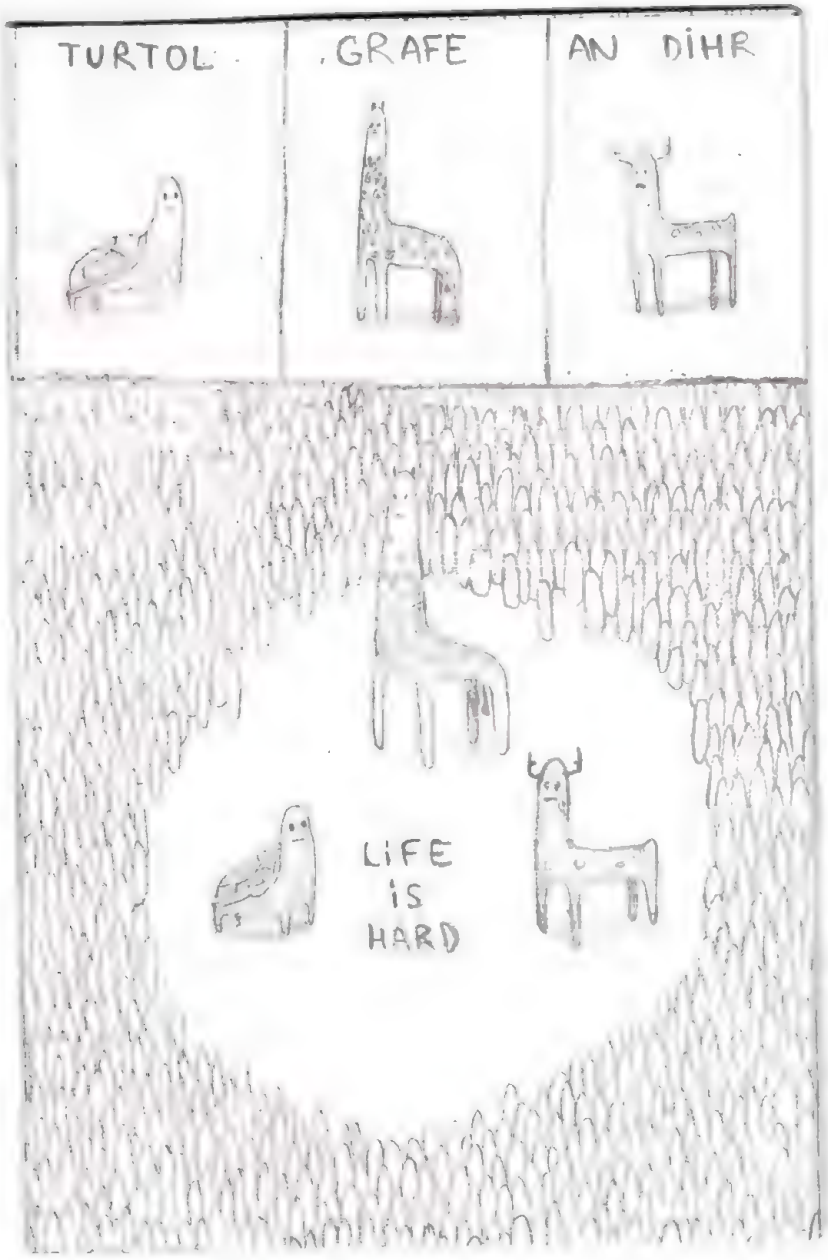
"What if everything is real? ... fuuuck!.." a poorly postured, unnamed lump thought-bubbles to himself, with only a sliver of reaction. Full of apathy, Helena Danghin's leading creatures are piled into physical shape by a heavy existential weight. The second issue of *unproductive, now!* can, on occasion, burden its reader with its close narration of life under late capitalism, but more often, it bites close to home, and then sublimates its ennui so that we chuckle instead of cower.

Danghin's series of short comics champion the absurd. "Workplace expectations and their real world meaning" yields a cynical deterrent for those on the ol' job hunt — a demographic who are simultaneously at risk of falling into the abyss when flipping through the collection. "Effective: taking as long as it takes to do something is not an option" rings a scary truth in our digital age, accompanied by a drawing of one of the few *smiling* blobs suspiciously holding a pen and paper that reads "Sign here."

Danghin's minimal style lends itself to the disaffected nature of her work: lots of blank space envelopes these anhedonic nugget creatures that offer our own inadequacies some solace. While its deadpan commentary may hit too close to home for some, *unproductive, now!* is a reminder that feelings of futility can still be channeled into art — and you might find a few laughs on the way. (Jenna McClelland)

EXCERPT

FROM **Animol Zoo** BY **Shayne Cassidy**



LITZINES AND CHAPBOOKS

Feels: The Lovesick Issue

Compilation zine, Hannah Browne & Sarah Vardy, issue 2, 56 pgs, FeelsZine, feelszine.wordpress.com, $18

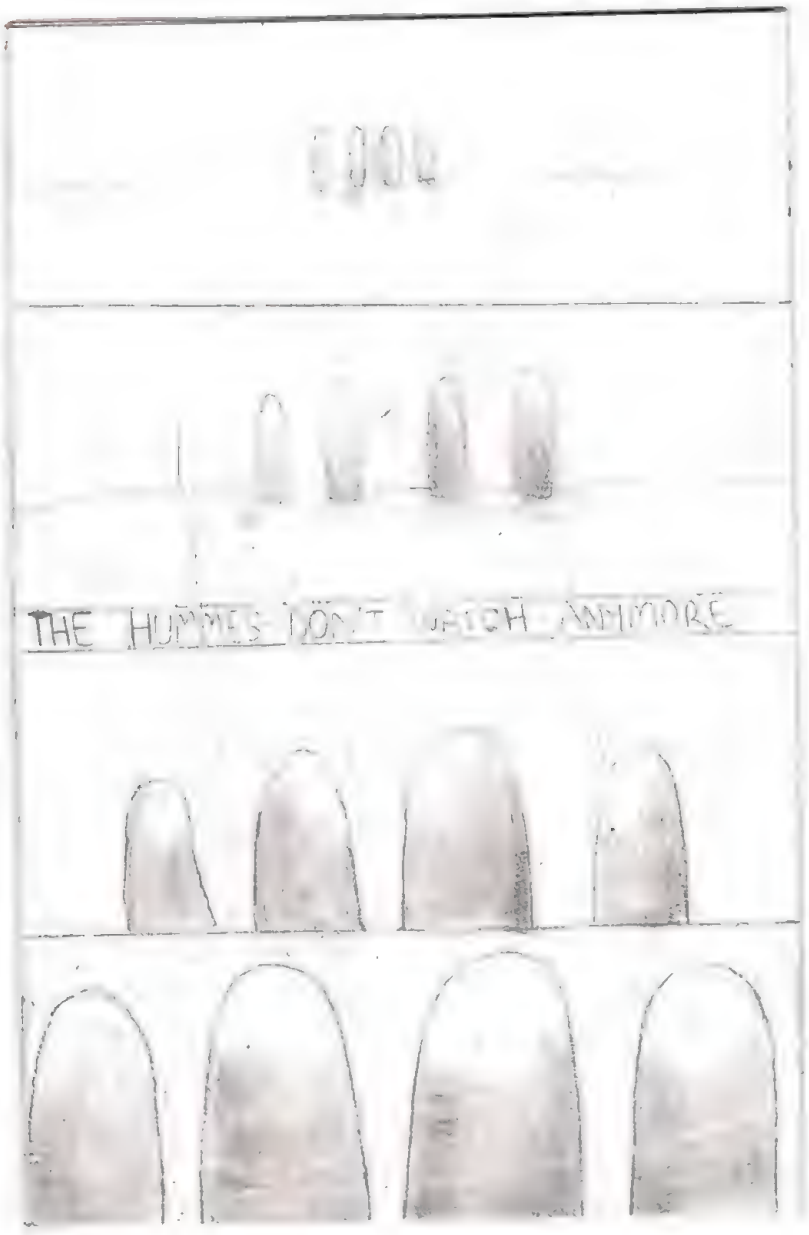
Approaching such a nebulous subject as "feels" seems a risky endeavour for any creative magazine — especially one willing to accept submissions in such diverse media as poetry, prose, photography, drawing, calligraphy, collage, etc. A collection is only as good as its contributors, after all, and thankfully Hannah Browne and Sarah Vardy are able to nudge a hazy prompt into solid, sometimes powerful, directions.

Feels' second issue traces out its contributors' combined experience with lovesickness. It is, then, a well-executed creative study on the subject matter, short enough to avoid growing repetitive, and long enough to tackle the subject matter from unexpected angles, keeping the material fresh. Highlights include "A Blank Slate," a short story by Altaira Northe, which begins on the model of a typical sick-lit novel, before unexpectedly flipping to reveal the gaps in that narrative, and an extra-romantic form of lovesickness which shines within the pages of a zine mostly concerned with romance.

Hannah Browne's design work really stands out here; with a pink-white colour-scheme, a cardstock jacket, and a handful of high-quality photographs rendered in full-colour, the magazine is a treat to flip through. Little nitpicks include the aphorism "I am not what I am" printed below a stylish photograph of Zach McKendrick being attributed to Shakespeare (should it not be Shakespeare's Iago?) and the self-conscious specification of "craft" beer in more than one submission (should it surprise us that the lovesick poets among us are also self-appointed craft beer connoisseurs?). But these are petty gripes, well made up for with by the production quality and attention to detail that Brown and Vardy have put into this issue. (Joel W. Vaughan)

EXCERPT

FROM **Animol Zoo** BY **Shayne Cassidy**



The Gorge: A Cartography of Sorrows

Chapbook, Wendy Donawa, Leah Fowler & Terry Ann Carter, 64 pgs, JackPine Press, jackpinepress.com

This chapbook aims to capture not only the history of a significant West Coast waterway, flowing inland from Victoria and through a multitude of culturally-charged districts, but simultaneously to grapple with its contemporary effect on the lives of one poet, one photographer, and one book designer. Though the work is attributed mainly to Wendy Donawa, the author of the eight-poem sequence contained therein, this review cannot help but setting the work equally on the shoulders of Leah Fowler, whose photography situates each poem immediately in the geographic, historical present of "The Gorge Waterway," and the book design of Terry Ann Carter, which — what with the book being composed of archived maps of the area — allows the chapbook's content to speak to its reader materially *and* poetically.

In terms of poetry, Donawa's most memorable images come from impressions of the present drudging up events from the past, as is seen in the poem "Cracker Boxes for the Children's" image of the Gorge's funerary "island of the dead," where "carved memorial figures / held burial boxes, loved ones curled, fetal, / and at twilight the bereaved paddled out / with sap torches, food for the dead, /chanted long into the night." It's a shame that the chapbook's subtitle wasn't pilfered from here, rather than the somewhat weaker final line to the same poem: "Low tide and the islet ringed with tidemarks. / A cartography of sorrows."

The Gorge is nevertheless an engaging look at a historical landmark, told from three different media in conjunction. This review would be remiss not to applaud Terry Ann Carter's gorgeous Japanese stab binding, which must have taken a great deal of handywork, and brings the reading experience to new heights. Bravo! (Joel W. Vaughan)

Revenge of the Freak

Litzine, William Brown, Volume 3, ohmemadebooks.blogspot.ca, ohmemade@gmail.com, free

Have you ever watched Nardwuar's first interview with Henry Rollins where the latter gets so impatient it's like he's about to punch Nardwuar's lights out?

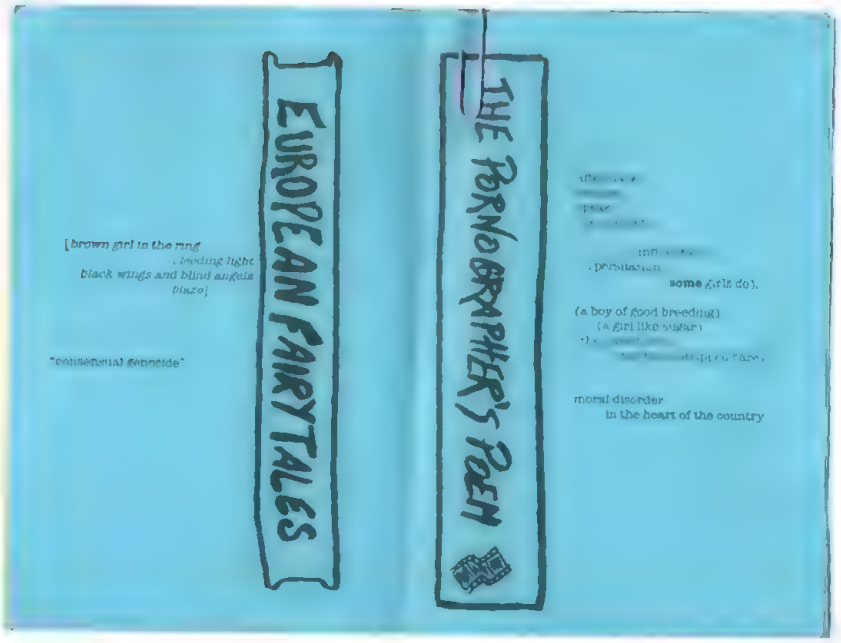
"One more question!" Rollins sneered, to which Nardwuar rattled off a dozen more questions in rapid fire mode. It felt like former Blag Flag singer was about to lay out the Human Serviette forever, but instead Rollins acquiesced and admitted that Nardwuar was a character, with a certain amount of wit and charm that he had to respect.

Upon reviewing my second issue of *Revenge of the Freak,* I feel similarly won over. The pieces here read like grotesque children's stories for grownups. William Brown likes to play with language and images in a free associative, purposely weird, and mostly coherent way. Each section describes a different character who have names like Glenn White, The Boy with No Arms, The Sunshine Kid, and Blankface all occasionally punctuated by a little drawing of a droopy hand or a zigzag shaped cat. All of them are outsiders, outcasts, or oddities such that I suspect that Brown sympathizes with his freaks. But I wondered to myself, in such a strange dreamscape, if everyone is a freak, is *anyone* a freak? Or as Jawbreaker's Blake Schwarzenbach put it, "deliberately weird is pretty obvious."

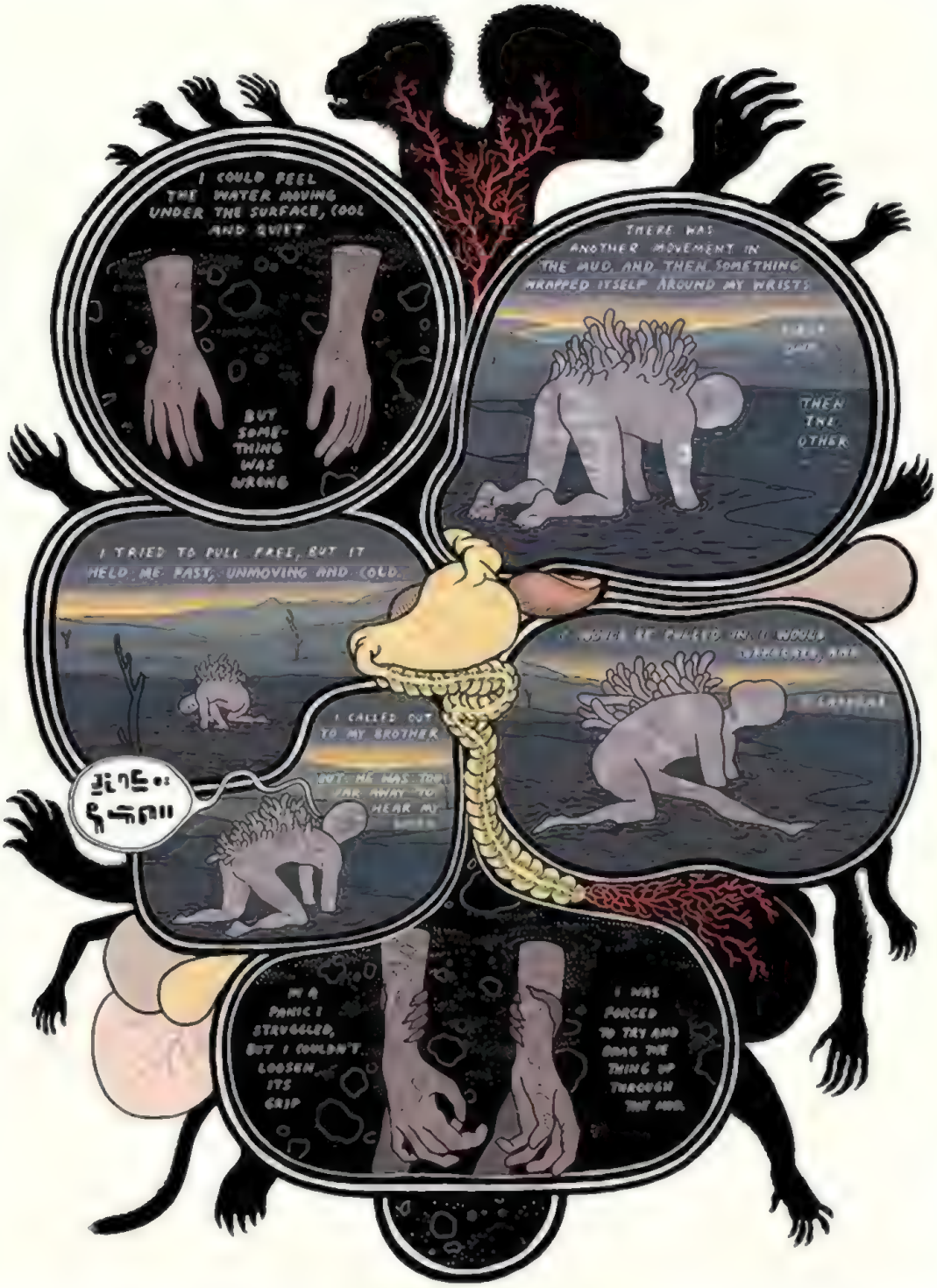
Ultimately, perhaps like his BC compatriot Nardwuar, *Revenge of the Freak* is not meant to be overthought, but rather appreciated for what it is. I think these stories would be best performed live, in an ostentatious outfit, with a goofy beatnik band backing up the whole thing. Hopefully most of the audience members would be zooted. (Chris Landry)

EXCERPT

FROM **Ten Canadian Short Plays** BY **Rasiqra Revulva**



FROM **Tongues** BY **Anders Nielsen**


I COULD FEEL THE WATER MOVING UNDER THE SURFACE, COOL AND QUIET
BUT SOMETHING WAS WRONG
THERE WAS ANOTHER MOVEMENT IN THE MUD, AND THEN SOMETHING WRAPPED ITSELF AROUND MY WRIST:
THEN THE OTHER
I TRIED TO PULL FREE, BUT IT HELD ME FAST, UNMOVING AND COLD.
I CALLED OUT TO MY BROTHER
BUT HE WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO HEAR MY
IN A PANIC I STRUGGLED, BUT I COULDN'T LOOSEN ITS GRIP
I WAS FORCED TO TRY AND DRAG THE THING UP THROUGH THE MUD.

Somewhere The / Shaking

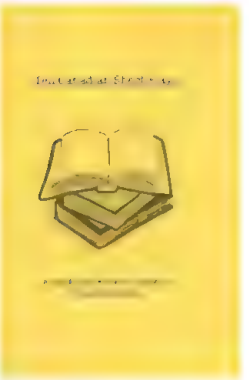
Chapbook, Sarah Cook, 26 pgs, above/ground press, abovegroundpress.blogspot.com, $5

Poetry that marks the end of a relationship is rarely refreshing; a considerable amount of detachment is required to prevent a slide from introspection into lamentation.

Sarah Cook ably manages that vital objectivity while inside her head, or inside her house (or a house she built with her words). She coins a term early in *Somewhere The / Shaking* that describes her starting point: "the ingrained estate of being."

Locations and items in the house act as emissaries for her moods, memories and failures. Each poem is titled with one: "Door," "Front Porch," "Bed Frame." The desk is an especially ominous presence — a constant reminder of a failure to accomplish. Cook's lack of motivation is evident and she acknowledges it: "i pretend to not have questions, to be a fan of waiting... Googled the definition of the word, 'eager.'"

This is a claustrophobic collection; there's a pervading feeling of emptiness in Cook's house. She's the only one present — though she often refers to an unnamed other — and we spend as much time in her thoughts as we do in the physical space. Much of this is cryptic, but some of Cook's enigmatic questions come across as profound (and ultimately rhetorical): "what is a moment when it's more than the word? ... why do I confuse bodies with answers?" (Scott Bryson)



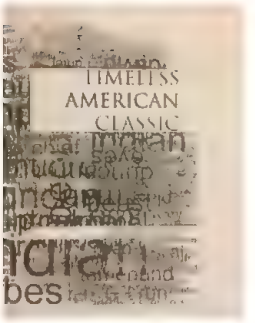
Ten Canadian Short Plays

Chapbook, Rasiqra Revulva, 14 pgs, rasiqrarevulva.com

While this is ostensibly a collection of short plays, it's also a peek at someone else's bookshelf, and the opportunity to judge others by what they're reading is a hard one to pass up. If the eyes are the window to the soul, the bookshelf is the door.

To build her plays — each one a title plus a synopsis or a handful of lines — Rasiqra Revulva pillaged the spines of her personal library, taking full book titles and combining them to create miniature dramas. While brief, the results are often clever: "Mosh Pit Diary: a portrait of the artist as a young man."

Crafting this kind of found poetry, with little or no manipulation of the source text (there were "minor typographical and punctuation edits" only), can be hit and miss, and there are a few amalgamations here that will likely never make as much sense to a reader as they do to Revulva. Still, *Ten Canadian Short Plays* is an amusing read, and the inclusion of a list of sources at the end is an unfiltered look at that aforementioned bookshelf. (Scott Bryson)



Timeless American Classic

Chapbook, Jordan Abel, abovegroundpress.blogspot.com, above/ground press, $5

There are no easy readings of Jordan Abel's collection of conceptual poetry. Like his previous works *The Place of Scraps* and *Injun*, *Timeless American Classic* takes a canonical, colonial text shreds it to pieces.

This time, Abel lifts and reorients passages from James Fenimore Cooper's 19th-century novel *The Last of the Mohicans*. The result is concrete poems created through a combination of machine reading, visualization and algorithmic allocation. Each piece stubbornly resists traditional interpretations, admittedly making it a frustrating read. But the value of Abel's work lies in its operation.

Timeless American Classic appropriates a timeless American classic. Abel reclaims Cooper's original appropriation and, more critically, disrupts the colonialist mythologizing of the novel. It's a sly and subversive tactic with mixed results. In a series of six poems, which all share the title "Indian," Abel isolates Cooper's use of the term, taking sentences out of context and placing them one after another. Rendered meaningless, Abel deftly weakens Cooper's stereotypical depictions. In the series "Blood Quantum," which features overlapping circles of text, the points where text collides is unreadable. Again, it's an operation that divests the original text of its power.

But appreciating Abel's rhetorical moves is largely an intellectual exercise. In its mathematical operation, the work lacks an emotional entryway, which might have gone a long way in combatting a novel whose dramatic thrust (it spawned Hollywood's Daniel Day-Lewis version, after all) and imperialist romanticizing has been key to its staying power. (l. Rattan)

Walrus

Family Hangover
Madic Records
madicrecords.com

There's a distinct British flavour radiating from these songs. Maybe it's the reverb. Maybe it's the way Justin Murphy's singing summons memories of Suede and The Byrds. Walrus' affinity for 1960s rock is well documented, but their approach is more modern than that foundation might suggest. This is woozy neo-psychedelia that's never lazy with its structure or pace. Imagine Yukon Blonde's enduringly catchy "Rather Be With You" adapted, stretched and warped across 45 minutes. *Family Hangover* is the kind of album where every song counts for something.

Needles//Pins

Good Night, Tomorrow
Mint/Dirt Cult Records
mintrecs.com

A few years' experience and a good amount of studio polish has dulled the punk edges of Needles//Pins, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. *Good Night, Tomorrow*'s pop-leaning "Violet" is their most beguiling tune yet. Three albums in, the Vancouver trio is less scrappy and more bombastic. They're still jaded, but a little less caustic. Singer Adam Solomonian's voice has gone in the opposite direction, his growl nearing Damian Abraham (Fucked Up) territory. Being less punk doesn't necessarily make a record less sincere, but long-time admirers will undoubtedly notice something missing in this radio-ready set.

Century Egg

River God
Independent
centuryegg.bandcamp.com

There's something familiar about Century Egg, but it's difficult to pinpoint. They manage to sound like several bands at once, and identifying a single stylistic cousin is a maddening exercise (perhaps Cub comes closest). That vague familiarity does tend to enhance enjoyment of their sophomore EP, a set of idle, guitar-forward pop songs that occasionally take on a hard edge (before retreating to their mellow beginnings). Singer Shane Keyu Song, who alternates between English and Mandarin, is a charming presence in both languages. (All reviews by Scott Bryson)

Illustration: Spencer Afonso // www.spencerafonso.com

EXCLAIM! 1992 25 2017

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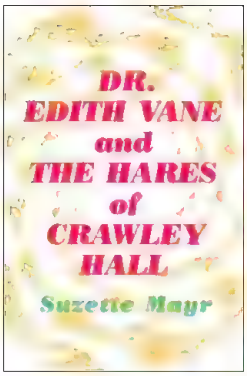
CANADA'S MUSIC AUTHORITY

TOMORROW'S MUSIC AND POP CULTURE, TODAY, ALL DAY

FICTION



Dr. Edith Vane and the Hares of Crawley Hall

Suzette Mayr, 224 pgs, Coach House Books, chbooks.com, $18.95

Dr. Edith Vane is going to start the new academic year right. She's going to exercise, publish her monograph, and become "the architect of [her] life." But with a broken washing machine, an ineffective robot therapist, and maliciously competitive colleagues, Edith's plans are quickly ruined. Even worse, Crawley Hall, the decaying brutalist centre for the humanities, seems to be haunted. Maggots drop from the ceiling, an army of eerie hares roam the halls, and professors disappear, fall ill, and die.

Suzette Mayr's new novel, *Dr. Edith Vane and the Hares of Crawley Hall*, is a searing satire of academia with a Gothic backdrop. Edith is an adorably awkward professor who spent 19 years writing her soon-to-be-published monograph on Beulah Crump-Withers, an African-Canadian writer. As a biracial Black lesbian, Edith's story highlights the discriminatory and exclusionary practices of academia through her abusive dissertation supervisor, who denies Edith's academic ability, steals her intellectual property, and treated her as her "cute and exotic-looking PhD student, her shy queer brown pet."

Alongside these powerful critiques of academia come hilarious moments of levity, such as when Edith fantasizes about one of her colleagues during a staff meeting, imagining them together "under a rumpled pile of blankets in a bed, reading Deleuze and Guattari together" in "Academic, romantic Elysium." Edith is a quirky, nerdy, overly sensitive underdog, and with Mayr's expert characterization she becomes utterly enthralling.

Dr. Edith Vane and the Hares of Crawley Hall is a brilliant, timely novel and a must-read for anyone who is or has ever considered pursuing a career in academia. With its excellent mix of humour and tragedy, Mayr's novel is a cathartic read that critiques the corporatization of the academe and the politics of exclusion in higher education. (Alexander De Pompa)

The Bone Mother

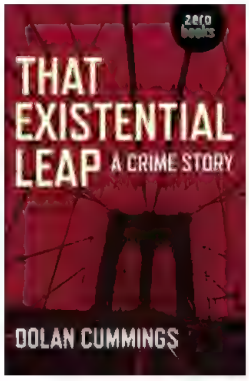
David Demchuk, 228 pgs, ChiZine Press, chizinepub.com, $19.99

The last of Eastern Europe's mythical creatures have fled to three neighbouring villages on the Ukrainian and Romanian border. Their final days — as they are hunted down by the brutal and mysterious Night Police — are chronicled in David Demchuk's chilling, Giller Prize-nominated novel *The Bone Mother*. In each chapter, a creature tells the story of their life, and under Demchuk's careful construction, they add up to a haunting tale about the effects of war and cultural devastation.

In Nicolai's chapter, he recounts his mother's story of how she nursed an injured wolf back to health, and describes how "when my mother died many years later, I knelt beside her bed and cried, and the wolves in the woods, they cried along with me." Demchuk's elegant writing is piercing, and he expertly imbues his horror novel with moments of melancholy.

Four chapters in the novel take place in contemporary North America and focus on the descendants of the mythical creatures. In Lena's chapter, she struggles with a human-devouring monster imprisoned in her back, passed down to her by her mother. Her grandmother tells her, "no matter how far or how fast we run, our ghosts and demons run with us, and are always close at hand." Lena's story is one of the standouts in the novel, a sharp metaphor for intergenerational trauma.

The Bone Mother is a harrowing novel that ends with many unanswered questions surrounding the Night Police, mirroring the lack of closure that we face with any kind of tragedy. Ultimately, these stories become a meditation on memory and storytelling. They exemplify how stories can provide a sense of solace and meaning that allows one to grapple with the otherwise inexplicable horrors of war. (Alexander De Pompa)



That Existential Leap: A Crime Story

Dolan Cummings, 212 pgs, Zero Books, zero-books.net, $18.95 US

Dolan Cummings built his novel around a set of ideas. The prime virtue is individualism, the prime vice conformity. There are two stories — not stories, really, but idea vehicles — loosely connected. One is set in New York and features a narrator who named herself Claudette, and her boyfriend, Seigfried. The latter is the book's hero because he is supposedly an arch individual, demanding that the world move out of his way so he can define himself. The other story is narrated by some

sort of ephemeral being that examines a Scottish police inspector named Alexander; this arc does have some elements of storytelling due to Alexander's string of romances. He is the head of the Occult Crimes unit, his self-defined project to negate occult motives and thus demand full perpetrator responsibility.

The philosophical discussion about free will and responsibility for both the good and evil in one's life is the book's strongest point. There are moments that are intriguing, such as when Satan tells Alexander how he found it "creepy" the way Jesus' disciples followed him automatically. This suggests that they were essentially brainwashed and connects to the larger discussion of the hordes of anti-Seigfrieds who voluntarily sacrifice their precious freedom to self-define by opting for conformity. In contrast to the brainwashing rapists who abound in the novel, Seigfried's group commit victimless crimes that supposedly accentuate their selfhood.

The problem with this novel is that I was able to fit way too much of its whole in my summary above. Aside from the somewhat involving romances of Alexander, the characters all fall flat because the entire book is summary without evocative detail. Cummings sacrificed the couching I intended to do by having a documentarian studying Seigfried directly criticize the useful-if-banal writing tenet "show, don't tell." On the same page, Claudette made a joke lambasting solipsism and I actually laughed aloud, since she and Seigfried are the most navel-gazing characters I have ever read. If Cummings had shown instead of told/summarized, he would have had to answer in advance my five bajillion plausibility questions and had living characters.

Let Seigfried stand as my example. Seigfried is a genius who can embezzle at will. As with most of Alexander's police procedure, the mechanics of the embezzling are never explained. Seigfried, who has five or 10 lines of dialogue in the entire book, is also a masterful fighter. There are casual references to other things he's magically able to do. If you're going to write a book about humans forging their own identities, don't centre it around a superhuman human. (Norman Feliks Jezioranski)

Oh Honey

Emily R. Austin, 141 pgs, Holland House, hhousebooks.com, $14.80

"Hi, my name is Pat. I'm calling on behalf of Broken Pencil to rev—"

You hang up.

Thank God I don't have to call anyone to review this book. Jane, the heroine of Emily R. Austin's debut novella is not so lucky. She works at a market-research call centre: "Please let me assure you that I am not selling anything." For reasons that eventually (almost) become clear, she calls a certain man over and over again, tormenting him. Don't worry. He deserves it.

Jane is a deeply afflicted woman, whose life is not made better by her near-constant self-destructive behaviour, from heavy drug use to physical self-harm, and her lack of a support system. There are valid, painful reasons why she's so troubled, which emerge as the story goes on. Through it all, she remains highly endearing — unlike the other characters who vary slightly in the degree to which they are insufferable. It can be exhausting, but it's hard not to agree with Jane's hilarious, sarcastic asides about them.

Austin paints scenes in a down-to-earth voice that is engaging and believable, yet often disturbing. I often wanted to look away in disbelief, but the book never let me. These moments aren't there to give the book an edginess factor, nor does it take pleasure in them.

Things get worse for Jane as the story goes on. Her reckless behaviour catches up with her and ends up having deep, permanent consequences. The only temporary reprieve from the suffering comes, oddly, on the occasional phone call at work, usually because whomever she's calling mistakes her for someone she is not, such as a friend. But these moments end all-too quickly and reality sets in again.

Still, some moments seem excessive, like one heroin-addled, non-consensual sex scene. There's no doubt the graphic depictions of self-harm, drug use, and sexual assault could be difficult for some readers to stomach.

Difficult as the subject matter may be to engage with, Austin's ability to paint scenes makes this a book to check out. I only wonder what would happen if she opted for lighter subject matter in her future work. (Pat Reddick)

Everything is Awful and You're a Terrible Person

Daniel Zomparelli, 204 pgs, Arsenal Pulp Press, arsenalpulp.com, $15.95

Why ghost someone when you could date a ghost instead? In "Ghosts Can Be Boyfriends Too" — the opening story of Daniel Zomparelli's debut collection of interconnected short stories — Jared, a twenty-something gay man, forms a triad with his boyfriend, Derek, and the ghost of Derek's previous boyfriend. Though on the nose, the story is a terrifically executed exploration of the metaphor of ghosting and how we're haunted by those who leave us. Like this first story, Zomparelli's collection, Everything is Awful and You're a Terrible Person, is that rare combination of critical, humorous, hopeful, and cynical.

Though set primarily in Vancouver with a few scenes in Toronto and a road trip through the Maritimes, Zomparelli recognizes that most of us also live our lives online through social media and

dating apps. Ryan, an average gay man, has 11 dates or online conversations in the book, and in these pieces of flash fiction Zomparelli provides some of his best humour. Ryan's hookup app conversation with Smalltownboy is a perfect example: "'Ho." / "I hope you meant hi." / ":p"" .

After numerous hopeless dates with guys with different expectations, Ryan eventually finds someone with whom he has a genuine connection: a monster who hides his furry body and wings under human skin that he binds together with duct tape. It's a bizarre but touching romance, and a poignant reminder that desire operates in unexpected ways, and that most people are just weird monsters looking for love.

At times outrageous but always unflinchingly honest, *Everything is Awful and You're a Terrible Person* is an insightful examination of contemporary dating among gay men that explores how anxiety, depression, and loneliness can affect our relationships. (Alexander De Pompa)

Winter Child

Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau, 200 pgs, Freehand Books, freehand-books.com, $21.95

When her son is born with his umbilical cord wrapped around his neck, a mother watches in agony as a doctor tries to resuscitate him until "at last the baby uttered a first tentative croak like a frog unsure of spring's arrival." The child survives this, but is hounded by death until he dies of pneumonia as a young man.

Virginia Pésémapéo Bordeleau's novel, *Winter Child*, translated into English from French by Susan Ouriou and Christelle Morelli, chronicles the story of a Métis mother grieving for the death of her son. Shifting between third- and first-person narration, it explores the lingering effects of colonial violence and intergenerational trauma family and gender expectations.

Bordeleau's writing is beautiful, filled with stunning meditations on parenthood, grief, forgiveness, and intimacy. One of my favourite lines comes at the end of the novel, in a chapter from the son's perspective as he tries to offer his mother comfort even after death: "Live in peace, ma mère. You sleep next to the fragments of my bones. You have planted a tree on my ashes to watch over your dreams and to know I still live close by, the guardian of your lands."

Winter Child is ultimately about reclaiming life in the wake of a lost loved one. The mother is only able to find solace in her son's death by reconnecting with Indigenous spirituality, and opening herself up to friendship and romance. Bordeleau's novel delicately and honestly traces how grief can rupture a life, and shows how love and kindness can repair it. (Alexander De Pompa)

Modern Love

Constance DeJong, 219 pgs, Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse, primaryinformation.org and uglyducklingpresse.org, $18

Fifi Corday, cabaret-performer-turned-memoirist and one of several narrators of Constance DeJong's 1977 novel, has this to say about her own life story: "If the project was to... become a published success, she'd better make Part III 'hot and spicy.'"

Composed of a network of narratives that range from mundane to surreal, *Modern Love* jumps from Elizabethan intrigue to Belle-Époque melodrama, from Oregon homestead to the streets of the East Village, always playfully disorienting the reader at every turn. This is a challenging read that somehow still feels like pure entertainment.

Today, the excitement around the re-release of performance artist and writer DeJong's first book seems to hinge on a hunger for a glimpse into the 1970s New York's art scene in the 1970s. *Modern Love* certainly does provide all the glamour and scandal one would hope for, and could be enjoyed for nostalgia's sake alone. However, it is much more than simply a salacious record of that time and place.

This is a thoroughly poetic achievement, its freshness and dynamism undiminished by the 40 years that have passed since its debut. Drawing on methods and moments from decades past, DeJong's clear influences — the most palpable being Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* — situate this book at a crossroads of high, capital-M Modernism and contemporaneity.

The presence of Fifi's own writing advice signals the subtle meta-fiction underpinning the whole project. *Modern Love* — which perhaps was picked up for precisely those "hot and spicy" tidbits from '70s New York — contains complexities that go beyond its positioning as a catalogue of scandal and passion. DeJong's recursive, racy plots connect reader, writer, and text with the complex and performative traditions in which she made the rest of her career. Let's hope this book stays in print, but this time for many decades to come. (Andrew Woodrow-Butcher)

It Is an Honest Ghost

John Goldbach, 144 pgs, Coach House Books, chbooks.com, $18.95

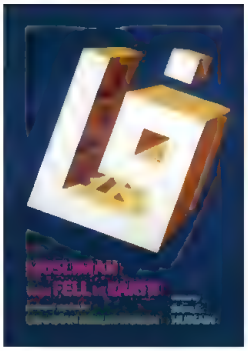
John Goldbach is smooth.

Easing us into this prose collection with a gentle meditation on longing,

Goldbach reminds us that carefully constructed stories still have room for some punch. I held my breath as I waited for a two-page long sentence to end, finally letting out my impatient breath as a laugh at the character's final dedication to manners. I slogged through the same old, overreaching arguments about death in this work's titular story that my university philosophy tutorials tortured me with, and was released by the bells of freedom I never heard, chiming "Okay, man, enough."

As Goldbach's words flow in and out of scenes, they swiftly work in those bolts you don't process the first time around, and after the sting has faded, a realization emerges — his antidotes are expertly concocted. An annoying drink mate transforms into a caricature of casual racism, as worthy of ridicule as a beer in their face. This work's contrasts focus on the good of the bad, and leaves behind the peculiar feeling of encountering sadness and accepting its place, like "Father Time, with his sandglass and sickle." (Grace Bueler)

NON-FICTION



The Muslimah Who Fell to Earth

Edited by Saima S. Hussain, 181 pgs, Mawenzi House, mawenzihouse.com, $24.95

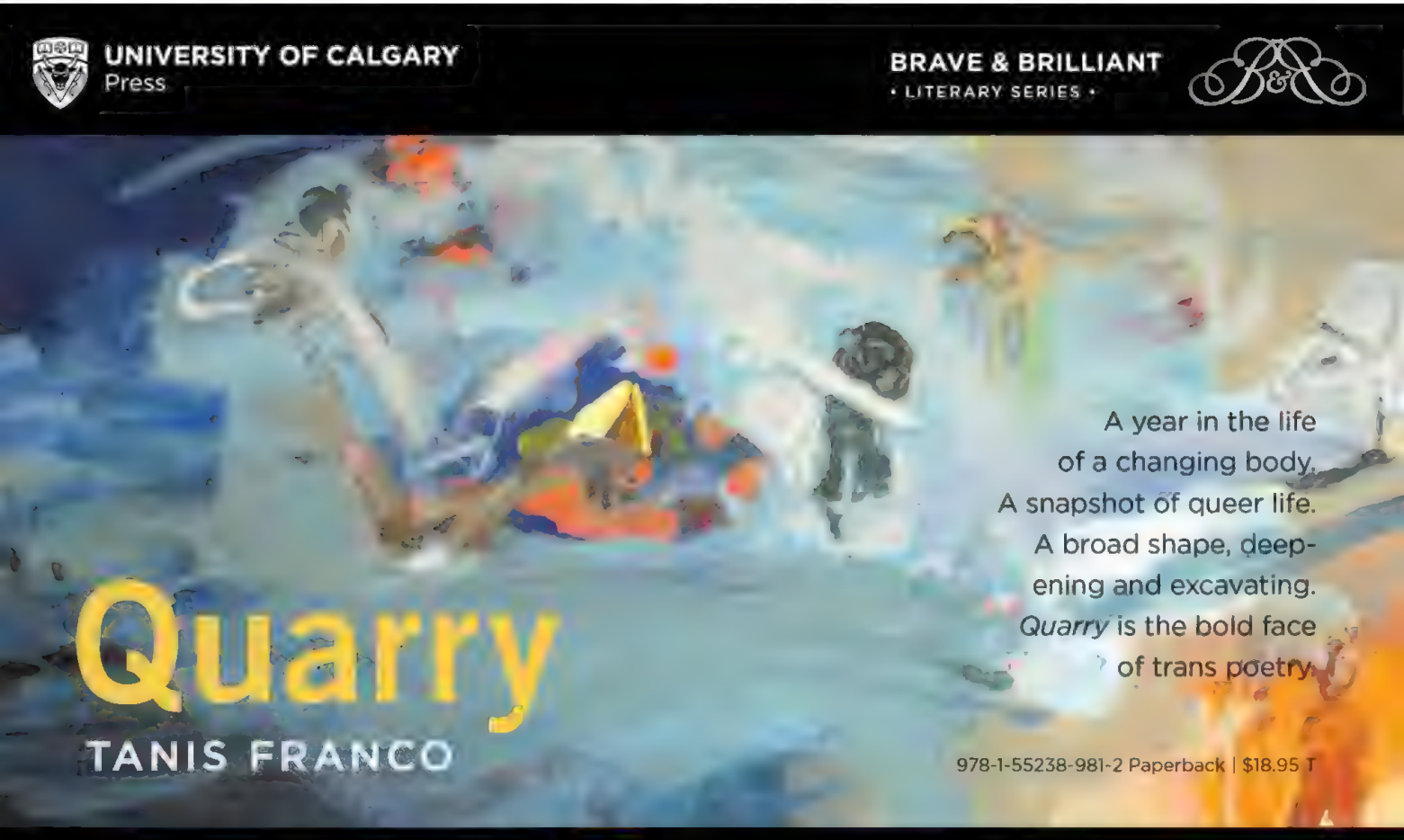
At times both cutting and soft, this book is a language for unseen Muslim women.

The collection of 21 stories, told in the words of Canadian Muslim women across the country, map the many crossroads and difficult parallels of gender across many cultures.

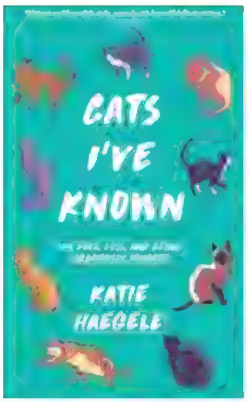
The stories are sometimes deeply poetic. As Faruqui writes in her piece "Vast Unknowables," "there is something melancholic in the hushed air of a December evening," setting the solemn scene of a rural Manitoba community. In this bitterly Canadian pastoral, faith is an intimate reality — "at these times and in the lingering twilight after sunset," Faruqui writes, "God feels very close." The images of Faruqui's Islam, her childhood mosque sitting "on a small plot of land in suburban St Vital," are never gratuitous. They only seem deeply true.

Other stories are matter-of-fact and share a narrative of margins being pushed. In "Queering Islam through Ijtihad," Maryam Khan prefaces her story with a warning: her experiences and beliefs are not a reflection of "all racialized Muslims who are gender and sexually diverse," she writes. These first two lines in and of themselves make a much vaster statement — that Muslim women don't adhere to typecasts and that their plotlines are never linear.

In a world where everyone thinks they



know Islam — where everyone thinks they know the pain and the power of the Muslim body — these stories expose the gaps. In them, the hidden identities of an already hidden identity converge. In them, Muslim women become real. (Ramna Safeer)



Cats I've Known

Katie Haegele, 192 pgs, Microcosm Publishing, microcosmpublishing.com, $14.95

Have you ever known a cat who mattered so much to you, or who was so ubiquitous, you couldn't imagine a life without them? Katie Haegele has known dozens. In *Cats I've Known*, she offers engaging, humorous and touching chronicles about them, with a rich illustration of the subject accompanying each of the accounts.

The book is accessible and reads as though it were a personal journal. In one chapter, Haegele is candid about her love for her sister's "first-ever cat in what is now — to my creeping horror — a five-cat household," an independent "Queen Bee" named Gloria. "I fucking love this cat," she writes — a declaration that will resonate with many readers who've had the pleasure of knowing a similarly free-spirited feline.

Thankfully, Haegele isn't simply gushing about cats. Instead, she uses the animals as a gateway into observing the people around her, from family (such as her mother and sister) to friends and, perhaps most intriguingly, strangers.

The book's strongest moment is when it asks a question many readers may have asked themselves: "How do you characterize the relationships people have with animals?" For Haegele's , they're similar to the relationships she has with people, but "simpler."

A book about cats could seem banal and hackneyed, especially since the antics of countless fleet-footed felines are just a quick internet search away. But in *Cats I've Known*, Haegele injects enough of herself — and other characters in her life — to make it well worth the read. (Justin Crann)

Deep Salt Water

Marianne Apostolides, 176 pgs, BookThug, bookthug.ca, $20

The ocean is a vast home, to births and to deaths — a perpetual ebb and flow of fluid change and sandy permanence. It is also the setting Marianne Apostolides adopts to tell an epic saga of abortion and loss.

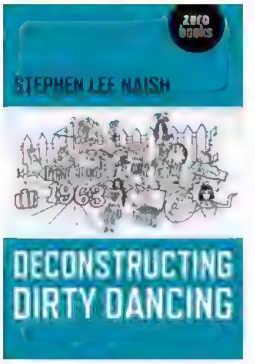
In *Deep Salt Water*, Apostolides traces her own history in conjunction with that of the Earth (a Greek myth of sorts) whose episodes work alongside the gestation of a child, never born. This chronicle brings us into the present, the anthropocene, and from her labour emerges this cleansing and meditative memoir.

Amidst the oft-employed water metaphor, Apostolides plunges to new depths, seeking an origin story for herself. She plunders words for meanings that aren't found in the standard abortion lexicon: "amnesty" is similar to "amnesia," perhaps to truly forgive we must forget, and, of course, writing "might be a salve, but it's not salvation."

Apostolides struggles to write into existence what is not there, the "gone-ness" that is now, paradoxically, a part of her body. Here, mixed media collages by artist Catherine Mellinger, scattered throughout the text, work to fill these spaces, to animate "dis-appearance" with beautiful, coral-coloured collages of the unborn daughter in various phases of development as a fugal accompaniment to the text.

Somehow Apostolides' attempt to tackle infinite expanse succeeds by way of commingling of sand, seaweed, and scientific fact reads like a breath of air, or a breeze from an incoming tide. Though "tides are predictable. Grief is not." We are reminded of the powerful echoes and impacts of a decision made 17 years prior, as though it were an eruptive volcano, or perhaps a crashing tsunami. The cause is unknown and unexpected, but the effect is powerful and lasting.

Apostolides' prose, clear but at times tinged with remorse, proves to be as hopeful and dependable as the ocean itself — "Life dredged me dry, but I kept flooding." (Megan Hamilton)



Deconstructing Dirty Dancing

Stephen Lee Naish, 79 pgs, Zero Books, zero-books.net, $11.95 USD

In *Deconstructing Dirty Dancing*, Stephen Lee Naish pushes back against the idea that the 1987 film is a chick flick only enjoyed for its predictable romance. Even critic Roger Ebert, Naish notes, gave the movie one star.

I watched *Dirty Dancing* again to refresh my memory prior to reading this slim volume. Even when reflecting on the basics of something I'd just watched, I rarely felt Naish was being obvious. Nor was he obscure by indulging in film school argot instead of being direct.

There were plenty of references to the perspective of the filmmaker, Eleanor Bergstein; on why she wanted to tell the story and what it had to do with her life; as well as to outside critics and scholars. Naish adds to our knowledge by describing deleted scenes and alternate endings as ways to consider the whys of the plot; he

has a sharp sense of the inevitable, justifying certain happenings and character choices that might have seemed questionable. Since the book most frequently addresses political and class conflict themes in the context of the film's early 1960s setting, Naish's instincts for storytelling balance the intellectual with the fun.

The best part of *Deconstructing Dirty Dancing* is its exploration of the film's ending, culminating its ideas in a perspective on the famous scene that I hadn't considered before. There was some magic in replaying shots in my head while having them explained to me in evocative language.

Yesterday, I was talking with my friend about the movie and she mentioned that a friend of hers had dated a guy who was persistently unable to see value in films he saw as stereotypically feminine, no matter what else such films had going for them. She "forced" him to watch Dirty Dancing with her and then swiftly broke up with him. It was a funny anecdote, but it does highlight the need to be able to argue persuasively, as Naish does, how prejudice can blind us to the deeper layers of certain stories. (Norm Feliks)

POETRY

Shut Up Slow Down Let Go Breathe

Marcus McCann, 96 pages, Invisible Publishing, invisiblepublishing.com, $16.95.

Toronto is about as peaceful as my lactose-intolerant stomach after drinking milk. The city is synonymous with bombardment, overstimulation, and squeamishness. Does calm exist here? And if she does, how do we find her? Marcus McCann plays with answering this question in the collection *Shut Up Slow Down Let Go Breathe.*

The melodic "Lyric for a Little Lullaby" opens the collection. The lines are inspired by those ominous subway announcements of transit delays: "We are currently experiencing a delay / westbound at Bay. / Efforts to resume / regular service / are underway." This is a familiar voice now broken into a measured step. Comfortable. Friendly. Kind. Halting. As promised, the transit lullaby rocks us to disarmed and restful sleep. Some great ideas for the TTC, if they're interested.

Other poems in the collection document personal anxieties of queerness, aging, the weird responsibility of being in the world with others. His words reverberate with those of us who have been there and done that. A new party anthem for the self-aware, Marcus writes, "I apologize for smothering the fun out of karaoke. But not really. / I peel packing tape from the skin of audiences" in "On Not Being Able

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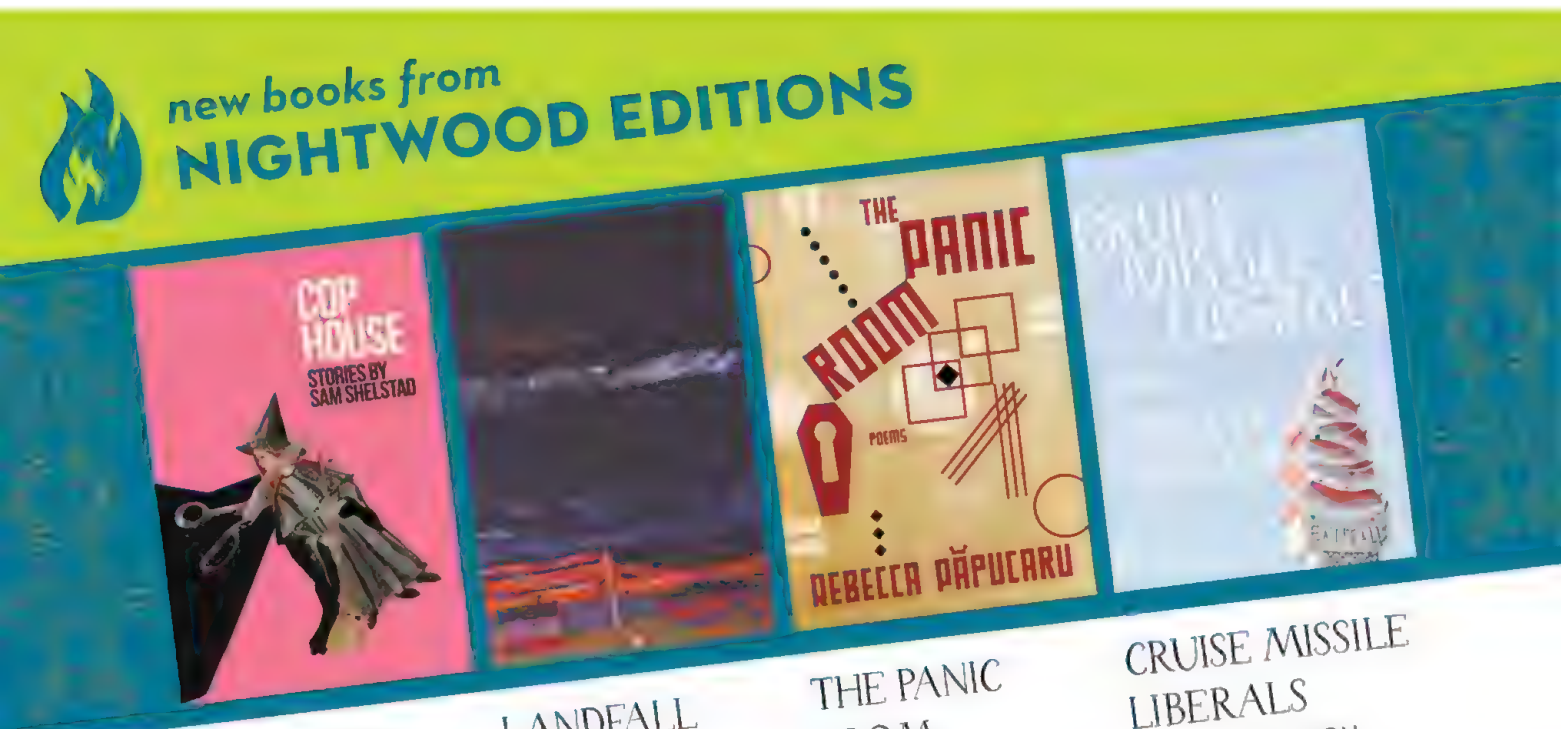

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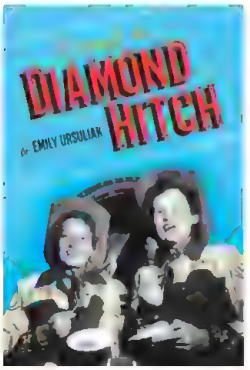
to Sing." He also tackles the professional anxieties when you write your resume or cover letter and must offer "an explanation of how you were gingerbreaded from the dough of their firm / at birth" in the aptly named "Cover Letter". Public, private, professional anxiety-inducers all.

Marcus' poetry collects the anxieties built from a combination of interactions within the city, between people, and with oneself. We are asked to slow our pace a heartbeat and observe those interactions. Document the anxieties. Laugh at them a little. Marcus guides us through a Toronto where the calm exists within the chaos, and we are only a car wreck away from finding it. (Jean Mathew)



Throwing the Diamond Hitch

Emily Ursuliak, 105 pgs, University of Calgary Press, press.ucalgary.ca, $18.95

Two independent and intrepid women buy a beat up Ford and drive it from Victoria to Alberta where they promptly buy two horses and ride back to Victoria. Oh, and they do it all in the 1950s when people think women ought not be leaving the house much let alone traversing the Rocky Mountains on horseback. This cycle of poems had everything I wanted and more.

Based on the true life adventures of author Ursuliak's grandmother, Phyllis, and her best friend, Anne, *Throwing the Diamond Hitch* follows their journey to the Prairies and back again. They encounter many incredulous spectators both men and women and defy them all with their gut and grit. The poems recount silly adventures like when the two have to break their horses out of a stable in Banff National Park and other more serious trouble associated with weather and health problems. In the search of the perfect pack knot, the legendary diamond hitch, they inquire after many cowboys who all lead them closer to the true knot, a true understanding of the west and most importantly, of freedom.

The only disappointment of the whole cycle is that the taste of freedom was so brief for these two. After the journey they went on to get married and move away from each other with their respective husbands — Phyllis to Red Deer with Bud and Alice to Prince George with Neil. This rollicking tale of the bravery and adventurousness of two incredible women on the Canadian plains is sure to please. (Megan Clark)

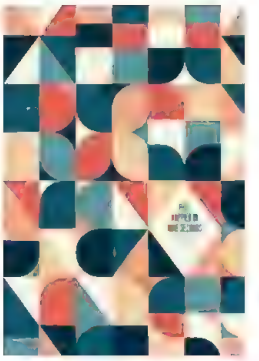
Totem Poles & Railroads

Janet Rogers, 168 pgs, ARP Books, arpbooks.org, $18.95

At first glance, it looked as if Janet Rogers chose an Emily Carr painting for the cover of her fifth collection of poetry. Rogers is an incendiary poet. Carr is an iconic painter. Rogers writes from her perspective as a Mohawk and Tuscarora woman from the Ontario Six Nations. Carr lifted her perspective from the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. It would have either been an odd or willfully ironic choice on Rogers' part. But on closer inspection, the cover is actually a painting from Ligwilda'xw Kwakwaka'wakw artist Sonny Assu. Described as a digital intervention on a Carr painting, it perfectly sums up the intent of Roger's collection.

Over 36 poems, she uses her craft to indict the 500-year intervention (read: theft, devastation and cultural genocide) of Canada on Indigenous peoples and their land. Her topics are expansive and even reach beyond Canada's borders to root out oppression, from attacking the Bering Strait Theory in "Red Earth White Lies" to unearthing the voices of Pocahantas and Sacajawea to expressing her feelings of hopelessness over Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women ("Bears Repeating").

Like Assu, Rogers is reclaiming stolen landscapes, and lives, and returning an Indigenous voice to them. That voice is formidable. In "Final Report," she gathers us together in pain with a blunt declaration: "unearthed stories till everyone / feels the trauma." Rogers' poetry demands to be read out loud to fully appreciate its insistent rhythms and devastating imagery. Simply quoting from the collection won't suffice; you have to experience the way that Rogers controls your cadence, quickens your pace when the verse requires urgency or halts it completely for moments of reflection. Part of this achievement comes via experiments with the visual layout of the text; the other part is simply magic. (I. Rattan)



Feel Happier in Nine Seconds

Linda Besner, 81 pgs, Coach House Books, chbooks.com, $18.95.

The poems in this collection travel a lot of ground but are united in their welcoming whimsy and sarcasm. In short order, Linda Besner becomes your favourite grumpy poet.

In the poem "On Body," Besner declares: "Art irritating life," which is a great thesis for this collection. In the best way possible, her poems irritate common tropes and ideas present in poetry, including love, loss, family, and the purpose of life. She addresses profound issues at the heart of being human with an agile lightness. On legacy she writes, "Browsing the earth / for mention of myself,

I pretend / I'm being interviewed."

Besner's earlier work, *The Id Kid*, was named one of the *National Post*'s Best Poetry Books of the Year and it would not be a surprise if this one garnered attention, too. Published by the respected Coach House Press, the collection is tight and flows well. There are some more unusual inclusions, form wise, notably "Magnetic Variations on One and Six," which uses coloured text based on the Fisher Price alphabet magnet coloured letter sets. Visually, it is difficult to read, but conceptually, it's interesting and matches the playfulness of the other poems.

Besner's poems are contemporary and charming, making for an enjoyable read and leaving us with images of today's world that will resonate beyond the book. For my part, this line has been popping into my mind whenever I open my internet browser: "Whales hit their heads on our workflow." (Megan Clark)

Admission Requirements

Phoebe Wang, 105 pages, McLelland & Stewart, penguinrandomhouse.ca, $16.95

At first glance, the title *Admission Requirements* feels like a reflection on the limits of belonging. "Admission" as inclusive, welcomed and "requirements," exploring the threshold between what is allowed, and what has been breached in spaces of acceptance.

"Do not limit yourself / to the space provided," Wang writes in the poem, "Application Form," as if the given parameters are not just physical. Our memories, desires, and longings of elsewhere are intensely compelled by the imagination.

This is what lingers throughout Wang's collection. She surveys how spaces hold more than what we see — a public park, for example, with trees shadowed by city buildings or surrounded by Victorian homes in "Dufferin Grove Suites." Or historical sites and museums where re-enactments of the past are relayed over and over again in "Portage" and "The Canadian Exhibit." All of which are spaces that have been carefully curated and defined by permits, entrance fees, and visiting hours.

Wang's poems uncover how spaces are haunted by an emotion, a memory. "Are we done at last / with the idea of breaking ground / now that every bit of *terra nullius* has been subdued?" Wang asks in the opening poem, "Tea Garden," reminding us of the limits of our own claim in what belongs to us.

What then, does it mean to belong? Is admission required for belonging? What is breached when those requirements fail?

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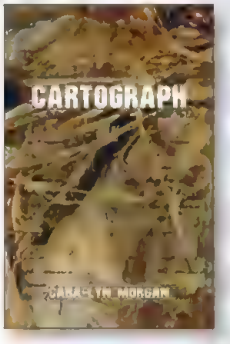

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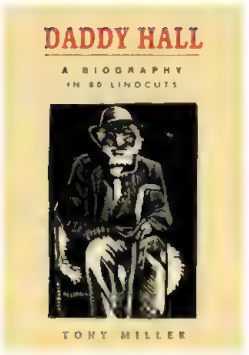
The difficulty present in Wang's collection is the tension that arises when confronted with these questions. We are constantly reminded of our own unbelonging, our alien-ness and unfamiliarity to a place. Instead, *Admission Requirements* moves and swells. There is always movement — a current like an unsettled longing across distances that echoes throughout. (Philippe Pamela Dungao)

GRAPHIC NOVELS



Daddy Hall

Tony Miller, 173 pgs, The Porcupine's Quill, porcupinesquill.ca, $22.95

At TCAF this year, I passed by The Porcupine's Quill table, was thoroughly impressed, and made a mental note to return. Instead, I blew my cash on other books and never made it back. Having now read *Daddy Hall*, I've come to regret my lack of discipline even more.

"Read" is the wrong word to use, since the book itself is a collection of 80 linocuts, which tell the story of John "Daddy" Hall. Hall's biography is the stuff "of tall tales, folk tales, heroic sagas and epic poems," according to Canada's Parliamentary Poet Laureate George Elliott Clarke, who wrote the foreword to this collection. (If you buy this book, don't skip the foreword. It really helps one make sense of and contextualize the images.)

Hall is an undercelebrated figure of Canadian history and the nation's 150th anniversary is a pertinent time for this book to be released. Hall was a mixed-race (Black and Indigenous) escaped slave who fought alongside Tecumseh in the War of 1812, travelled the Underground Railroad to Owen Sound, became town crier, and begat a literal score of children. He lived from 1783 until 1900. The linocuts begin even before that and depict the kidnapping of Africans by British colonizers. One of these people goes on to become Daddy Hall's mother.

The images are clear, striking and have remarkable depth that requires a few minutes of study to fully appreciate. They call to mind work from the Harlem Renaissance, which Clarke also notes in his foreword. The way Miller builds textures is impressive and adds much to each image. It's hard to believe this is all pulled off using only white and black, which speaks to Miller's talent as an artist. Everything is beautifully composed and emotionally evocative.

Even if it weren't the sesquicentennial, *Daddy Hall* would be required reading. But the fact that it is a historic year makes this biography of a Black Canadian hero even more important to read. (Pat Reddick)

I'm Not Here

GG, Koyama Press, koyamapress.com, 104 pgs, $12

"...today we are the living cadaver of yesterday's lost life."

This musing from the poet Fernando Pessoa opens GG's graphic novella, *I'm Not Here*. The quote is functionally an epigraph explaining the book's key thematic questions — the body, aging, memory, loss, death. Yet it is also a hint, an evasive explanation of the book's structure. Its eight vignettes (or is it nine? It can be hard to tell...) start with the most recent and go deeper and deeper into the protagonist's memories. The fragments depict, in reverse order, a daughter struggling to cope with her parents' aging, measuring the slow creep towards death in missed phone calls and awkward silences.

It's hard to say if there are lessons to be learned or glimmers of hope to be found in *I'm Not Here*. To try might be missing the point. Rather, GG meditates on the pain of expectation, the stubbornness of expectations, the paralysis of guilt, with more patience than judgement. In one scene, the protagonist gives directions to her father, who is lost and driving around just a few minutes from his home but deadest against letting her get in. She tells him to take a right. He drives off and takes a left. Good intentions, misdirection, pride, and disappointment dance quietly on the dark, suburban street where they meet.

The art style is beautiful digital black and white illustration, two-dimensional but alive with detail and subtle expressions, reminiscent of Adrian Tomine. As the scenes go back in time, they get paler, muted, playing in light greys and lots of whites. Deeply sad, the entire book is imbued with a quiet candor. GG's knack for depicting stillness, slowness, and solitude is heavy and mature. Telegraphic, short on words and context, GG gives her story and herself tight limits to express quite a lot — and the result is exquisite. (Jonathan Valelly)

Kru Jac: A Year in Thailand

Jacqueline Lai, 150 pages, self-published, jacq-lai.com, $20

Jacqueline Lai introduces us to the vibrant life of rural Thailand in her graphic novel *Kru Jac: A Year in Thailand,* composed of 150 pages of colourful hand-drawn illustrations. There is so much to love about this book.

Lai switches seamlessly between ink, marker, pencil, and watercolours. The ink

bleeds on the page like she's drawn the picture moments ago. Life at her school is drawn in intimate detail. We follow her into the classroom, see lectures, meet students, and share meals. We even travel to the Akha Church for a Thanksgiving service. The world in *A Year in Thailand* is exquisitely bright, lively, and charming.

Not only is the art a visual delight, but Lai's writing is a breath of fresh air. Her commentary balances the humorous with the contemplative. She shares fond memories of class: "Students presented their flipbooks today. One kid called his rocket ship flipbook, 'Your Love Takes Me to the Moon.'" Whereas other students most likely did something like this: "My English class student Gukik came up with the sentence 'they like to request sick leave.' Ha ... already thinking about slacking."

Throughout, Lai juggles between archiving memories, illustrating her observations, and educating those unfamiliar with Thai culture. Though the graphic novel has a choppy and non-linear flow, Lai beautifully threads narrative fragments together with a cheerful style. This graphic novel is a joyful celebration of new experiences and an excellent addition to the shelves of travel and art enthusiasts everywhere. (Jean Mathew)

Sputnik's Children

Terri Favro, 360 pgs, ECW Press, ecwpress.com, $19.95

Debbie Reynolds Biondi is the underground creator of *Sputnik Chick: The Girl with No Past*, a comic about an ass-kicking, time-travelling, dimension-hoping babe who, unlike most superheroes, lacks an origin story.

After 25 years of success, Debbie knew it was time to write Sputnik Chick's origins, but this also means facing her own past. You see, Debbie *is* Sputnik Chick and her comics are based on her own experiences, especially the time-travelling, dimension-hopping bits. Debbie originated from another timeline that shares similarities to ours, with the biggest difference that in Debbie's timeline the Second World War never ended. With the help of her friends and a man from the future, Debbie is charged with saving her timeline from nuclear annihilation by merging it with ours.

Fravo's alternate timeline and its history are well-crafted. She skillfully balances Debbie's past and present to complement each other. The past tends to outshine the present, but this could be Debbie's nostalgia for what she left.

Debbie's reliability as a narrator is constantly called into question. She likes lorazepam and cocktails, she's had mental health issues, and her timeline is all kinds of crooked. While I liked the idea Favro was going for, it did not always work Whenever Debbie expresses doubt in her own tale, I was removed from the story, Debbie's story

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OVER SHARING
SHAWN HITCHINS
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MALAGASH
Sunday knows how to make her dying father live forever: a computer virus. *Malagash* is a precisely crafted, darkly humorous novel about a family in mourning.
ecwpress.com

was entertaining and interesting enough for me to not really care if what is being served is bullshit or the real deal.

Sputnik's Children could have used a bit more polishing in the editing process, but Favro's skill as a storyteller is only rivaled by that of her heroine. For that, and the wibbly-wobbly timey-wimey stuff, it's worth checking out. (Rayna Livingstone-Lang)

Tongues, Chapter 1

Anders Brekhus Nilsen, 48 pgs, self-published, andersbrekhusnilsen.com, $15

A Prometheus-like god, chained to a mountainside, tells an eagle his last dream before the bird slices open his stomach and eats his liver.

A boy, with a teddy bear strapped to his backpack, wonders a godforsaken desert, out of food yet filled with teenage angst.

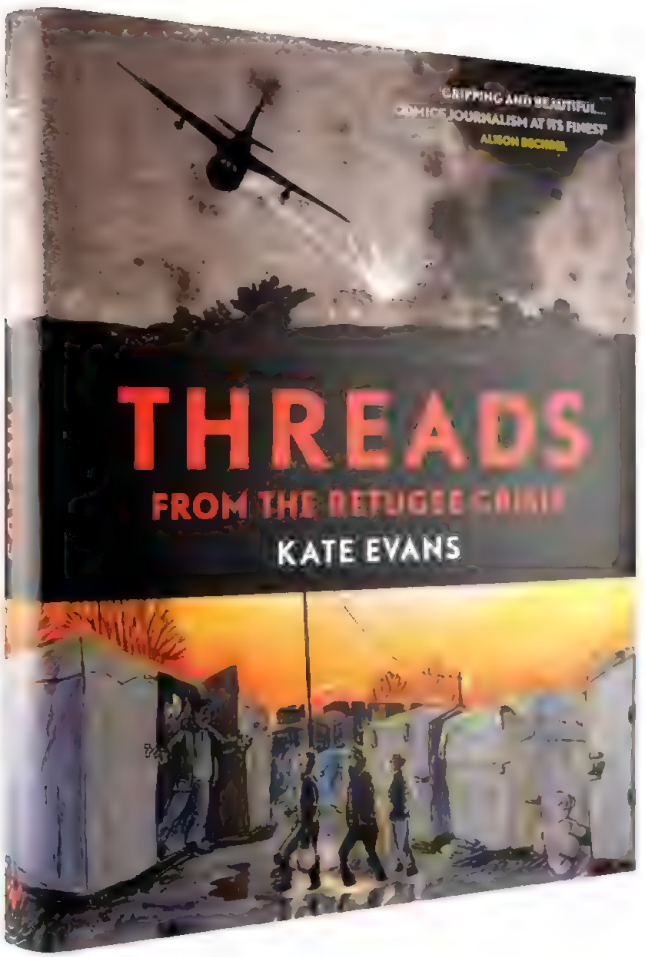
A 13-year-old Swahili girl is told by a chicken that the fate of the world rests in her hands.

References to an ancient god, the fate of the world hanging in the balance — these are hardly underemployed tropes. Yet *Tongues* feels fresh thanks to Anders Brekhus Nilsen's way with a colour palette and storytelling.

From the cover to inside flap, it's clear that a great deal of thought went into perfecting the long-form comic's design. By far, my favourite part visually was a sequence of pages illustrating the nativity dream of the aforementioned god. While the rest of the comic is geometric with the dry colours of a barren desert, the dream sequence is outlined by the bodies of men and beasts, with entrails pulled and stretched out to frame dawn-coloured images. I've half a mind to cut the pages out and frame them on my wall.

Throughout *Tongues*, Nilsen plays with expectations. For example, in the opening scene, an encounter between an eagle and monkey had me sure I'd soon be saying: bye, bye, monkey. But things don't turn out as expected, and such twists and turns throughout the comic keep anticipation up and pages turning.

With this only the first chapter, many questions arose and remained answered by the conclusion. But if this installment is an indicator of anything, it's that for this series, more good things lie ahead. (Anisa Rawhani)



Threads
From the Refugee Crisis
by Kate Evans

A heartbreaking, full-color graphic novel of the refugee drama

"Evans both captures the wrenching reality of a seemingly intractable problem and makes an eloquent argument for its solution: open borders." —Alison Bechdel, author of *Are You My Mother?* and *Fun Home*

"A moving first-person account of a volunteer in the refugee camp at Calais, France." —*Publisher's Weekly*

"It's impossible to read *Threads* without feeling an emotional response, from outrage to tenderness to deep frustration." —James Yeh, *Vice*

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VERSO

Why is the Path to Nowhere

Michael McGlennon, seven songs and 72 pgs, self-published, michaelmcglennon.bandcamp.com, $15

You've heard of the visual album. Now, get ready for the comic album. This psychedelic folk record comes with a comic book companion, which can be enjoyed alongside the music or separately. I read along while listening to the accompanying tunes, which only took about 20 minutes.

The experience of reading a companion comic while listening to an album took some getting used to. For the most part, the pacing of the book and the music is synchronized, and the lyrics cut out to give you time to read the dialogue. There are, however, a few parts where I had to pause the album to catch up, and others where I read a little bit ahead. These stories are meant to be parallel, not necessarily the same thing presented through different media, so I can't fault them for not perfectly lining up.

The book, with its typewriter text on white, blocky speech bubbles and occasional overlays, looks like a cut-and-paste-style zine, which is a neat touch. It's printed using offset lithography, further adding to the old-school analog aesthetic. The art style is complex and often somewhat grotesque, all of which matches well with the weird, psychedelic sounds on the album. And the music is often weird, have no doubt about that.

Well, everything about this is weird. I mean that positively, though I admit I'm still not totally sure about what was happening in a few scenes. Don't let that put you off though. *Why is the Path to Nowhere* is a charming set, and it's clear a lot of love went into its production. The format of an album with a companion comic is something I'd like to see a lot more of, and I thank Michael McGlennon for introducing me to it. (Pat Reddick)

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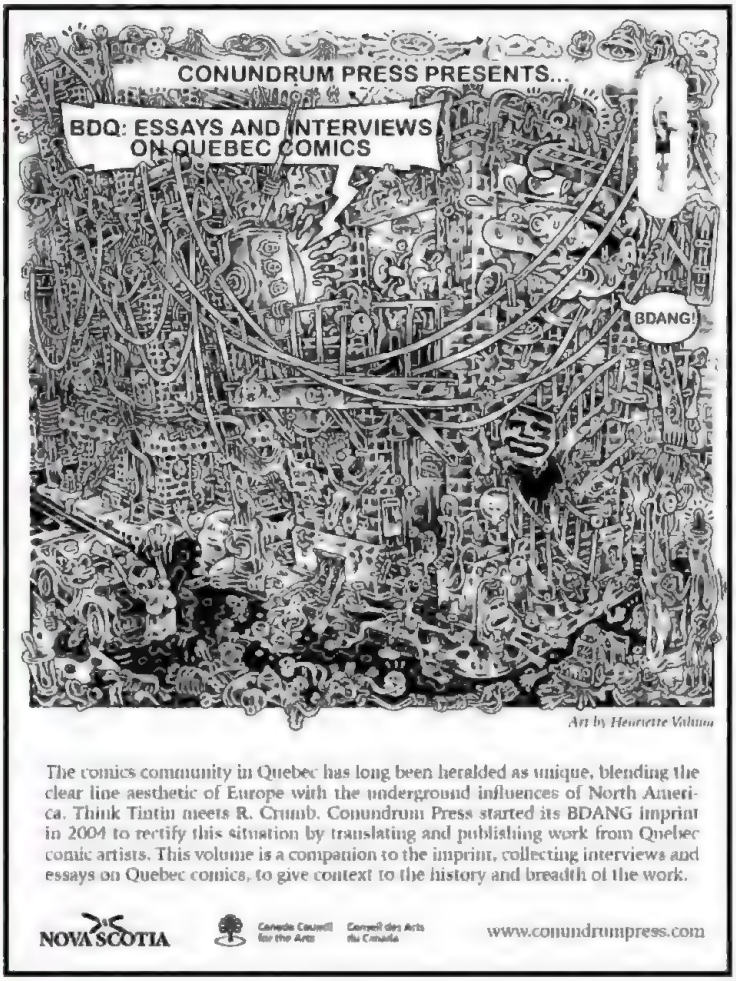

Art by Henriette Valium

The comics community in Quebec has long been heralded as unique, blending the clear line aesthetic of Europe with the underground influences of North America. Think Tintin meets R. Crumb. Conundrum Press started its BDANG imprint in 2004 to rectify this situation by translating and publishing work from Quelsec comic artists. This volume is a companion to the imprint, collecting interviews and essays on Quebec comics, to give context to the history and breadth of the work.

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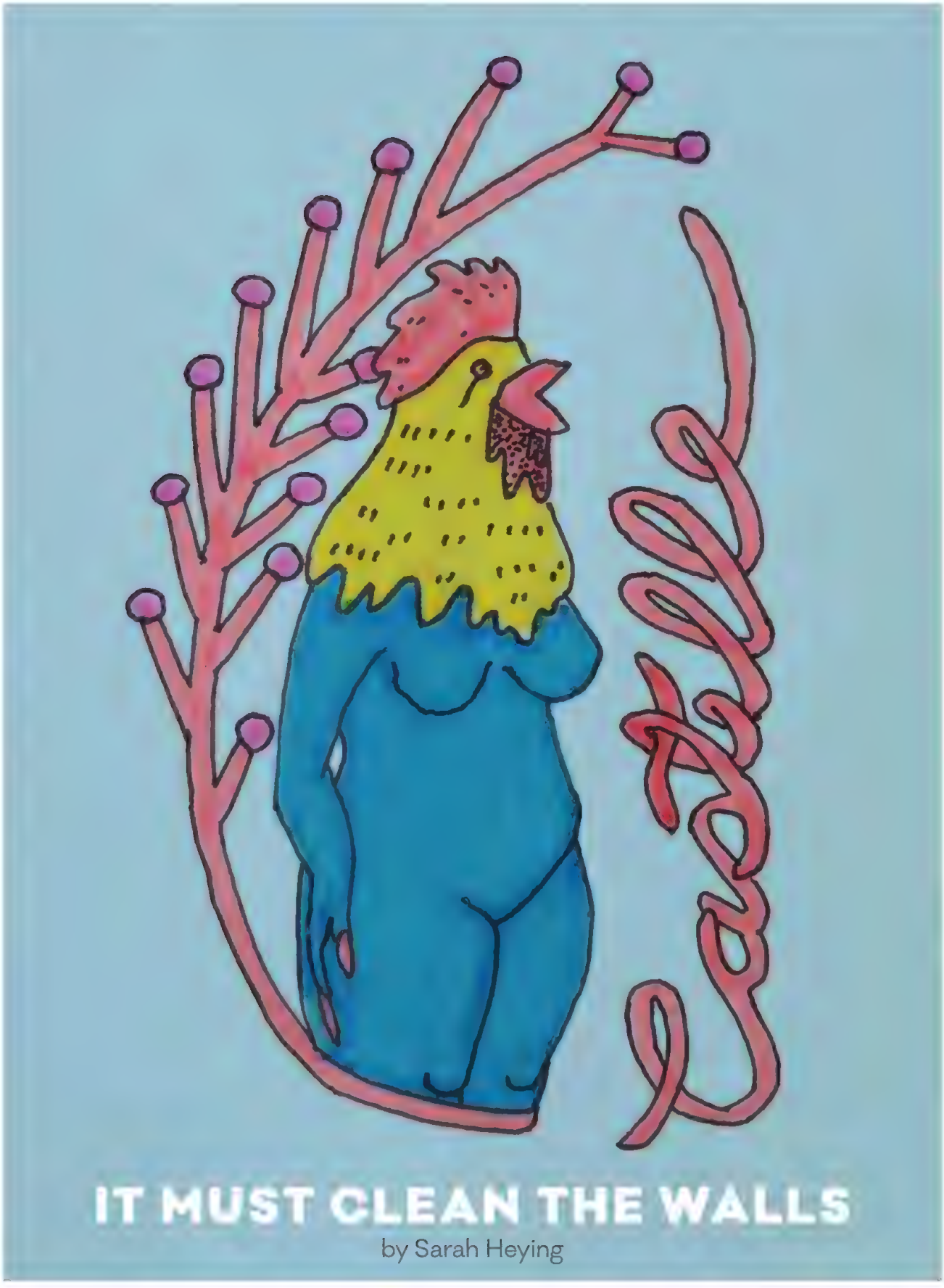


IT MUST CLEAN THE WALLS

by Sarah Heying

illustrations by Liz Kesten

It must eat herbs for healthy skin. For cognitive function. For sexual stamina, hormonal balance — healthy adrenal gland. It will chase these herbs with a shot of Evan Williams for good luck. Evan Williams tastes good in first coffee. It must resist Evan Williams before noon.

It must not eat the beans that produce flatulence. Do all beans give gas? Maybe only chickpeas. It no longer cares for heated food, but when Aaron comes to visit the trailer It boils eggs for lunch lest he worry. Aaron is a good brother. Aaron's load is too heavy for one life. It tries to play normal around the good brother.

It forgets most rules for normal, but It does know that one must always choose a boiled egg over a raw one, no matter if they are the finest eggs in Jackson County.

Aaron says he doesn't recall bringing eggs on the last grocery delivery. He picks away the shell and the cloudy membrane.

It tells him about the long walks through the woods, for fresh air and healthy attitude.

And you just happened upon some fine, grade-A eggs from those wild chickens in the woods?

It says that Stevenson has enough eggs to feed an arena of school children.

Don't be stealing from that farm, says Aaron. I'll bring you eggs if you want them. He bites into the yolk.

The yellow paste on Aaron's teeth and lips sickens Its innards from esophagus to anus. But It must show Aaron It can eat. It cracks the eggs against the lip of Its plate. It pulls a segment of brown shell and membrane from the trembling, gelatinous white. It returns both egg and segment to plate.

You best have the courtesy to eat your stolen egg.

It eats the egg. The stomach complains. It rises from the table and carries both plates to the sink.

It must place the left foot precisely within the centre of one square of the linoleum's lemon and dark blue checkerboard pattern and the right foot precisely in the centre of another before Aaron can ask whether or not It slept this week.

You'll get bugs and rats keeping house like this, says Aaron. Dried drips of old sauces and grease cake the cabinets, the walls. And the trash, the trash. Take out your damn trash. I can't see the floor through all the bags.

You can see the floor.

Not much, he says. You feel better when you clean. Have you slept this week?

It says It slept.

He loads the trash bags into his truck and leaves. He will return tomorrow.

It must clean. It must scrub the brown grime from the lemon-blue checkerboard. But first It must take a nap. First It must count the jar of pennies on the bookshelf to make sure none are missing.

The face of Stevenson appears at the window behind the desk where It has stacked pennies in neat piles of tens. Each crease, whisker, and mole is distinct under the harsh sun. It will not fear his grin, or the rap of his knuckles three times against the glass. It would like to watch him leave and count pennies to forget him, but he holds up a bottle of Evan Williams.

* * *

It must fuck the Daughter once a week lest Stevenson begins to think a body should work more often, such as every day. Once a week is enough to make him forget about every day.

It must find leather sexy. It must find weapons sexy. It must find dying sexy.

The Daughter owns many weapons of the medieval sort. Balls with spikes, sticks with spikes, spikes with spikes, sticks with blades. She displays them on a wall in her basement, a basement she says It can use for shelter in case of tornado because everyone knows the first thing cleaned up by a twister is forgotten trash. The Daughter's walls are muraled in a continuous appliqué of a too-blue tropical scene. The old weapons are nearly lost in the cartoon palm trees and electric ocean.

The Daughter tells It to strip. It removes shoes, pants, t-shirt, underwear. It bends over and doesn't look while she inserts limbs and objects, or while she pinches, sucks, bites. Stevenson films them from the corner. Like always, the Daughter ties a plastic bag over Its head. Like always, the Daughter tears off the bag just before the last breath.

Am I nice or am I mean? asks the Daughter.

Mean, It says. The blood throbs, and the brain.

Good dog, says the Daughter. Stevenson hands It a bottle of Evan Williams and walks upstairs to his half of the house.

The Daughter says she wants to show It another autopsy video.

It says no.

Sit down, she says, and pops the cassette into the VCR. I finally found a prego. How glad are you?

It says nothing, for an infinith time. It will say nothing unto Its death, unto Its afterlife, or unto nothing everafter.

It sees the face of the dead woman for a moment —she's Asian, maybe Chinese, and young. The surgeons place a hand and napkin over the woman's face and cut a Y from each shoulder to the pelvis. The body looks wrong. True flesh does not cut so clean. True flesh spills blood beneath the cleaner layer.

The Daughter says this is an unlicensed procedure, that the body was pumped with chemicals first. Everything will look like plastic.

The surgeons rip the triangle of skin away from the sternum and up into the neck. The tissue sticks to the bone. They tear at it with knives. They cut the fat from the breasts and toss each lump, translucent and yellow, onto a steel table at the side of the bed. Then they tug up the ribs and the trachea. Lungs, heart, kidney, liver — all tossed onto the steel. The table must be cold, It thought. But the cold body can't.

They cut deeper into the abdomen. Up rise the entrails. Up rises the foetus. The surgeons throw it all onto the table. Little playthings, a pile of parts.

Look at that! says the Daughter. Another clean cut-up.

Where's the blood, It says.

There's no blood in this art.

* * *

It must wash Its hands before and after touching babies. It doesn't know any babies anymore.

* * *

It must clean the walls before sunup. The dust and dirt, grease, slop. It must scrub. With what? With the sponges brought by Aaron. With Dawny-slime dish soap. No, pure with castile.

How does one properly scrub away filth? Left to right, left to right. Over and over and over and—

It must scrub clean the home before sun-up. Before Aaron comes tomorrow.

But when It lifts the filthy dishes to scrub the filthy sink, It spills filthy water upon the cabinets, and when It pulls away the sheets and the pillows, It shakes all the dust of the bed upon the floor.

It scrubs the walls, but tips over the half-full trash bin. It places the books on the shelf but breaks the ashtray in the process.

It loses the will to clean before sun-up, or ever again. It sits down on the stripped bed and sips whiskey from a mug.

The Daughter appears at the window, her white face a fright against the harmless dark. She sees that It sees her, but she raps on the window anyway.

It opens the front door to let her in.

Your place is disgusting.

She's wearing a backpack and a baseball cap that says I Make 50 Look Good. She's not even thirty.

I have something for you, she says.

You're not supposed to come over.

I missed you.

She sets the backpack upon the floor. She demands a glass of whiskey. It gives her what she wants.

She tells It to strip.

It asks why.

She says, Why do you think?

It tells her It can't fuck twice in one day. It tells her the blood takes a week to fill the brain again.

She laughs. I didn't bring the plastic bag, she says.

It tells her It can't fuck again until next week.

She's looking for something in her backpack. She pulls out a thin dagger with one hand and another bottle of whiskey with another. A whole litre this time.

You do what I ask, I'll give you this litre. Should last you a couple weeks if you're good. You can't refuse.

She scrapes the dagger across the green vinyl wall. A white scrape trials behind.

It strips. She tells It to lie on the bed. It lies on the bed. She ties Its legs and arms tight to the bedposts.

Here darling, she says, you'll need this. She dumps whiskey into Its mouth. It chokes and dribbles the waste down Its chin.

She removes her hat, her shoes, her dress, her underthings. She downs her mug of whiskey, then pours another to the brim and downs that too. She removes a parcel from the backpack — some mysterious item wrapped in white cloth. She brings parcel and dagger with her to the bed and sits on Its thighs.

Please don't kill me, It says. The house must be clean. Before sunup. Before my brother gets here tomorrow.

Hush, she says, and feeds It several chokes of whiskey.

She rubs the flat side of the dagger against Its stomach. She places the parcel where the cool metal has just been.

I'm so glad you're here for this, she says. She raises the dagger. They call this the Mercygiver. Knights used it to deal a final blow to a dying opponent. It was the only dagger thin enough to fit through the breast plate.

She downs another glass of whiskey and says, I need to return something.

It braces Itself.

The Daughter clenches her jaw and brings the Mercygiver into her own body. She carves slow, an I-shape, from the bottom of her ribs to her pelvis. Blood slops onto Its belly, onto the white cloth of the parcel, onto the bare mattress. She wails, but still she cuts and pulls at the tissue. She catches her entrails in her hand.

It wretches. It swallows and swallows to keep down the bile.

She picks up the parcel with her free hand and presses it hard into the space below her stomach. She screams and falls forward onto her hands. Her guts fall onto the skin of Its stomach. The parcel sticks halfway out of the Daughter's lower abdomen.

It must meet her eyes. It must listen to what she says.

Tell him, if you see him, tell him I'm with child.

It must tear Its arms free from the rope and hold her as she dies in trembles and jerks.

* * *

It must kill a goat after sins against the flesh. What is the flesh: a sacred body. Goats are unclean creeping beasts. Honour the flesh, slaughter the beast. Lay a hand upon the head of the goat and cut its throat. Sprinkle the blood round about upon the bed. The innards and legs It shall burn on the grill, burn as sacrifice and offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Father. The meat It shall bury in the dirt. Last, It must bathe the blood of the beast from the sacred flesh. Two parts pure castile, one part purified water.

* * *

I'm no son of God. I'm only your brother.

It opens Its eyes. Its brother sits at the foot of the bed.

The house looks beautiful, he says. Did you work too hard last night? You slept later than usual.

Everything's fine, It says.

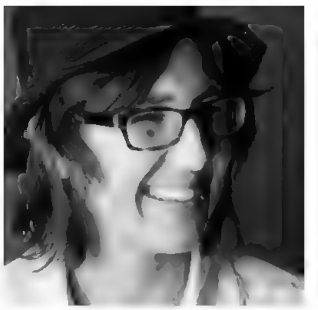
It sees the house is indeed clean. The walls have been scrubbed, the dishes washed, the floor mopped. It sits up. The sheets are on the bed.

Listen, says Aaron. Kathy's gone missing. They haven't found signs of foul play, but I just know her father's up to something. Keep away from that man, you hear? And let me know if you see anything strange.

There's no blood, It says. It lifts the sheets and examines the mattress. Aaron thinks it's a question for him.

That's right. She could still be alive, but trapped somewhere.

It finds a faint splash of brown on the mattress. It replaces the sheets.



Sarah Heying is a queer writer who grew up in Missouri, though she's spent her entire adulthood moving around the South. She currently lives in Memphis, TN, with her two big goofy dogs.

HEY [redacted] are you expensive red lipstick? 'Cause watch me mess you up in two minutes.

He's jealous, let's just get that out of the way first. If you're going to date my ex-boyfriend, you need to know this. He's covetous and crazy suspicious. I called it stalking, he called it "staying informed." One morning I texted him, "Hi," and he replied, "I feel like u lyin' but ok."

He's got more issues than *Vogue*. I would come home from work and he'd have a face like a smacked ass. I mean, the man couldn't stop his Blu-ray from flashing 12 o'clock but give him the Wi-Fi password and he'd find the name, address, and blood type of some jabroni I kissed in Grade 6. I get it, the first 40 years of childhood are the hardest, but c'mon dude, once the bra comes off, don't you dare ask me to do anything.

That's number one.

Number two, he would make tortured-animal noises when we boinked. Not the normal stuff like the sound of stapling sausage rolls together. That, I could tolerate. No, his orgasms sounded more like a fox fucking a bagpipe. He was the coitus version of Skrillex. But when we only had quickies, he was a bit quieter. When I was on top and could control everything, his noises became deeper and a bit more unobjectionable. He sounded kind of like a cat drowning in porridge then. Now that I think about it, he's also kind of like a labrador in that he dribbles a bit and his erection looks like pink lipstick. In short, be prepared to bone the menagerie.

Meeting him on Facebook doesn't make you special. Let me guess, he sent you a cheeky, solitary poke, right? You poked back because his profile photo was showcasing his delightful ginger neckbeard and fish scale-coloured eyes. His interests included the TV show *Columbo* and "saying

'*derp*,'" so really, how could you resist? Then he sent you a message, "That poke's gonna leave a mark!" with an obnoxious smiley face at the end. Oh, how he reels them in so sprightly and deftly. "Picking up girls on FB is easier than catfishing fat chicks from Florida," he will say to his buddy one day when he thinks you can't hear. By the way, if he told you he's a "positive person," he meant HPV.

I can imagine how your banter progressed from there. What got you? Was it his in-depth analysis of the hidden genius of One Direction? Don't let his Bowie and Foreigner vinyl collection fool you, he loves One Direction. He sings it in the shower. He went through an entire tub of gel once, trying to perfect the Zayn Malik hair flip. It's funny to me that there's a band called One Direction because that's also what I call my asshole.

If you decide to date him, his love of Neruda and Bukowski will be endearing at first, especially when he reads you passages late at night. But after a while, it becomes nothing more than intolerable weakness. Bukowski hates women and Neruda is a misanthropic drama queen. Consider his literary choices foreshadowing to your relationship. And despite his love of literature, you are going to have THE.BEST.TIME.EVER reading his stream-of-consciousness, wank-fest emails. You're going to have to remind him constantly to close all parentheses 'cause we ain't paying to air condition the entire paragraph up in this bitch.

Personally, I like my men the way I like my coffee – all over me in 30 seconds. If you're a slob like me, know that he's got a germaphobe complex and is a bit obsessive compulsive about cleaning. Sure, babies can throw food and shove Cheerios up their nose, but when I did it, I was "disgusting" and "I'm moving tables so the waiter doesn't think I'm with you." If you're looking for a fiery lover, you've come to the right place, because he rubs his genitals with Clorox. If you eat spaghetti and meatballs in his kitchen, you better wear a dress made out of one giant wet wipe. Sometimes I would tell him I was going down to the park to feed the birds, but really I was going there so I could eat an entire bag of Wonderbread. The incessant scrubbing and stocking up on Brillo pads really made it impossible to relax around him. I'd get so tense, I could bite off the end of a cigar with my asshole. (One Direction is a hungry mistress).

If you date him, his brother Angelo will come over periodically and make not-so-subtle suggestions that he's ready and willing should you two ever breakup. Angelo smells like a peeled onion fermenting in the sun. His father, Carmine, will text you every so often, hinting at his desire for grandkids. "You've only got one egg left, dearie, so don't fuck this up." This will cause many fights between the two of you that are very painful. You will have the urge to take your nails and plunge them into his larynx when he suggests you're afraid of commitment. I mean, I'm still wearing my makeup from last night so don't tell me I have commitment issues.

Luckily, he's a loyal boyfriend and you can trust him. There are no skeletons in his closet. Just a black latex dildo suit.

I say all this, but you should know if you make the decision to call him your boyfriend that I actually really did like being with him. Sometimes we would have a sing-along to all my favourite Beatles songs in the tub, and that was kinda nice. We'd sing 'When I'm Sixty-Four' and splash the sudsy soap water. And every so often, my veins would pulse stronger than my heart. And I would feel them throbbing all the way to my bones. Like my marrow also loved him. So brush up on your *Sgt Peppers* and your *White Album*.

If you decide to end it, you better be sure. 'Cause yeah, he's annoying and jealous and obsessive and intense, but still, his stupid affectations amused you. You liked the way he always absentmindedly rubbed your thumb gently when you held hands. You liked his Buckwheat Banana Pancakes on Sunday mornings. And even though you think white boys rapping is an abomination, you liked how he knew all the lyrics to "Twinz" by Big Pun and Fat Joe. He would rap quietly to himself as he sat on the john when he thought you couldn't hear. You liked the way he called his dad every Saturday morning just because that was their thing. And even though you'd never admit it to anyone, you liked blowing raspberries on each other's tummies. That was your thing. Then suddenly, it's nobody's thing.

At first you'll feel like you dropped 170 pounds of dead weight, but pretty soon you will miss this person who sat next to you on the stoop at dusk to eat pizza, graciously picking off all the slimy-gross anchovies for you. You didn't even have to ask. He just knew.

Girl you better be listening to everything I'm saying. Don't make me take off my earrings. You need to take notes here with a big pad.

You listening? Good.

These are the eight simple rules for dating my ex-boyfriend.

Christine Estima's work has appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *subTerrain*, *The Puritan*, *Grain*, *EVENT*, *The New Quarterly*, *Descant*, *Room Magazine*, *Matrix Magazine*, *the Antigonish Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The Madison Review*, and many, many (many) more. Please visit .

EDGAR, OLDER

by Laura Legge

EDGAR, ELEVEN, with mosquito bites behind his knees. Edgar, turning twelve tomorrow. Edgar with his horrible wobble from pre-birth. Edgar with his heart bubbling up like a campfire cola. Edgar demanding to understand things a boy can't understand. Edgar's father a silver birch uprooted from Siberia; Edgar forever stripping bark from that timid tree. Edgar with his mother's forester hands. Edgar with *On the Road* saddling the pocket of his nylon swim trunks, Edgar with his four-acre world perimeter, Edgar with his sidestroke vision. Edgar with his sizzling suntan and one infected toenail. Edgar, eleven, who hides a wild strawberry in his bellybutton before entering the moss house so he can have one pleasure before sleep. Edgar whose mind is a single blackfly buzzing around, looking for a companion, biting all the little glia in its lane. Edgar, who gives names to blackflies when his mother is logging and his father is typing reports for Hydro-Québec. Edgar, who drills a pill of blood in his arm and bets himself Space Lung will beat Glu'urp to the feast, and who, winning the bet, is left with an enflamed arm. Edgar for whom pain is an activity. Edgar, who rubs himself naked on rock elms. Edgar who shambles barefoot over hemlock needles and stiletto stems, throwing stones at wolverines. Edgar, who once licked poison oak and cached the after-ache like a crush, until his father offered oreilles de crisse and he had to open his mouth. Edgar, whose body speaks through cuts and mutilations.

Edgar, with his feelings so big they anaphylactic his throat, Edgar who wears sensation baggily, an insect jacket made for a grown-up. Edgar, who thinks things like, *This peach is marvelous*. Edgar in his skull dull as ash, animated by peaches. Edgar, who rubs his mother's pioneer shoulders after eating sticky stone fruit, hoping she will finally fuse to him. Edgar, who is always slipping past her sight. Edgar who falls into streams and fin rot rivers, Edgar who stumbles into trapping pits, Edgar, a wild duck sausage in a summer casing of sweat.

Edgar unlinking herbal smoke to approach his faraway mother. Edgar hankering for a toke. Edgar thinking how pretty she looks, her oily plait long as an umbilical, her earlobes plugged with predator teeth. Edgar wanting to hoover the flakes from her scalp, Edgar who flecks his own dead skin onto Coleman corndogs, thirsty for salt. Edgar, who is all dead skin. Edgar coughing and only being given the dandruff eyes on top of her head. Edgar whose mother, behind the tears of now, says *Later*. Edgar who pretends one moosewood by the moss house has a voice, Edgar who

spirit-asks the moosewood why it sounds so morose. Edgar, with his care for timbre. Edgar, who has felted a party hat for the moosewood, in the poison pink of a berry he found on one of his Legion of Frontiersmen expeditions. Edgar, who squirrels his parents' party hats under his pillow, one bull-thistle blue and one liverleaf silver.

Edgar, after dinner, watching his father scrub his teeth amid the sumacs. Edgar, uninvited into that ritual, gurgling vinegar loud as a raven. Edgar, no chin-chuck or tuck-in. Edgar, a warm-blooded bedroll between his father's gas and his mother's voltage. Edgar, too livewired to sleep. Edgar, who pretends to be dozing sometimes so he can carelessly carefully mow his body into his mother's. Edgar filching touch. Edgar counting, to dawn, his father's cris de coeur. Edgar, adventurer, finding love in oblivious noises. Edgar, who lives past the bobcat jaws of four and five in the morning. Edgar, tearing off his bedroll and stumbling in his moth-holed underwear to the dell between the elms and the bathtub lagoon, sunrise breathtaking as a whole bag of wish chips. Edgar, wanting to tongue-kiss a whitetail. Edgar, twelve and overwhelmed. Edgar, alive. Edgar, scritching like a beaver in defense of her young, hoping to wake his parents. Edgar dreaming of spider silk streamers and wild mint cake.

Edgar, whose father is now unbending, tall as a friend on a friend's shoulders, from the moss house. Edgar, whose father is peeing on a patch of his mother's columbines, the plants she chooses as her gossip audience, even when Edgar is close-by. Edgar, tearing off his underwear, streaming small as a kinked garden hose. Edgar shaming back behind the cotton. Edgar, whose father walks to the Coleman and does the greasework of a grown man. Edgar, whose mother now stumbles under bacon fumes, ungrogging her cheeks. Edgar, who is twenty meters away, staging a standoff between French explorers and Cristinaux, Edgar who is playing both sides, Edgar who is holding weapons to himself. Edgar, invisible, even in blood battle. Edgar, as Étienne Brûlé, singing Edgar a birthday song: *Mon cher ami, c'est c'est à ton tour/de te laisser parler d'amour.*

Edgar, shaking as his mother mounts her motocross. Edgar in a standoff with his tears. Edgar, who has never seen his father cry, even after a rototiller unlaced his shin hairs. Edgar, who dreams of growing into the kind of eyes that glass at pain, the eyes his father uses to look at him now, from twenty–slash–a million meters. Edgar, whose father is calling to him with excavator arms.

Edgar, paddling on phantom canoe to the campfire pit, Edgar making a ghost of his breath. Edgar freeing his big ears for a hear-hear. Edgar doing mouth isometrics, preparing his littlest muscles to say, *Thank you dearly.* Edgar, whose father has finished making the bacon, Edgar, who is being asked to clean up. Edgar, who has just lived in the body of a coureur des bois, Edgar who has just run, goosey, through the woods with a fantasy pelt in the pit of his arm. Edgar cleaning up. Edgar looking at his father through misted glass.

Edgar moving unfeelingly into clouds of mosquitos, Edgar, head-down, headed back to his peat pillow. Edgar in diaper-white underwear, Edgar with a nose-stream long as his lifetime. Edgar hearing the ricochet of a shot-shell, Edgar whipping around to see a dove drop into his father's hands. Edgar suddenly reveling in the sun of his father's beam. Edgar eagering across spruce spikes back to the campsite. Edgar in his dove-white underwear, Edgar scrunching onto an ash bench, Edgar plucking grey plumage. Edgar, twelve and very special. Edgar barking his own birthday brunch, Edgar with a full-grown hunger. Edgar forcing past the flimsy skin, Edgar emptying the bird of its bones. Edgar with his father's worldly hands. Edgar, charring the heart first, Edgar cottoning to that candy. Edgar, feeling the absence of felt, running to the moss house to spirit away the party hats. Edgar whistling *Mon Cher Ami* and fixing one to a fork in the moosewood. Edgar tying the other's string below his father's beard, Edgar teeming with too much gladness. Edgar listening with his stick-out ears to his father drone the rest of the song, Edgar alive in the spark-burst of dove fire. Edgar-Kissed-on-Headgar, Edgar, Loved-and-Fedgar. Edgar, after, revving his father's ATV, proud of the working man who made him. Edgar warming his old man's ride, Edgar with his nest egg of smiles. Edgar buoying broad-chested back to solid ground. Edgar, knowing he is growing, Edgar whose canvas shoes are giving birth to baby toes. Edgar rolling an imagination film — his mother in her corduroy dress, its clasps all careful and padlocked, and not even thinking he should cling.

Edgar, older, watching his father coast until he is small as a cloudberry. Edgar, still bored, still sensitive as a tooth nerve, but twelve enough to big into those feelings. Edgar bayonetting what's left of the bird as his father's dust begins to settle.

Laura Legge lives in Toronto. She is the winner of the 2016 PEN International New Voices Award.

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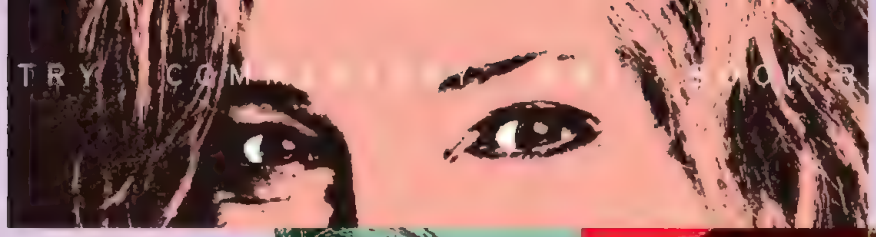

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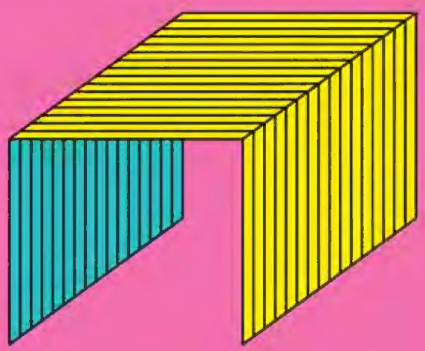

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Nos apoyamos: ¿SERIO? Zine, Brown and Proud Press & Beyond

by Luz Magdaleno Flores

JUST TODAY, I sent my lowrider foto zine to my amiga. She has access to a colour printer at the non-profit she works at, and hooks me up from time to time. That's how we do it out here as people of colour making zines, nos apoyamos — we help each other out. I'm going on my fourth year now as a zine maker. It was never something I expected to get into, to be completely honest.

I grew up in Southern Califaztlan, and even though I am now proud of the punk community and zines that come out of my hometown, they never found their way to me growing up. I moved to Chicago for undergrad and joined an activist club in 2014. During the uprisings in Ferguson, I got so annoyed that my homie Alvaro Zavala, an incredibly talented artist, and I, a journalism major with a passion for photography, were being asked to go knock on doors and phone bank for mediocre politicians instead of using our talents for the greater cause.

Talking through our frustration, a fellow Chicana organizer suggested we make a zine. "Qué es un zine/what's a zine?" I thought to myself. Well, a quick trip to Quimby's bookstore and a closer look inside record stores quickly got my attention. I fell in love with how honest and non-commercial the contents within zines were. I hit up Alvaro, and he quickly got on board. We started to document the stories of the activists we admired. We created *¿SERIO? Zine*.

It ran for seven issues covering topics such as economic justice, intersectional feminism, climate change, Mexican-American identity, queer narratives, survival tips, love and activism, and the haunt of colonization. It shared crystal knowledge, reviewed metal and punk bands, shared dope art by people of colour, and mucho más. It wasn't printed in the highest quality (we were starving students after all!), but we put in a lot of work, stayed up late, bothered our friends to submit, posted flyers all over, hit up strangers, got hella frustrated (printing isn't easy!), and made it happen.

We went on to win the social justice award from Roosevelt University in 2016. Our five-dollar zine sold enough copies to help fund trips to Toronto's Queer Zine Fair, New Orleans Comic and Zine Fest, Santa Cruz Zine Fest and Los Angeles Zine Fest. It wasn't easy though. Not only was the profit non-existent, but being all up in white spaces can be exhausting. A lot of white folx would walk by our table and see that we were two brown kids selling social justice propaganda and kept on walking. That didn't bring us down though, because everywhere we went, we met other zinesters of colour!

I am forever thankful to Monica Trinidad, co-founder of Brown and Proud Press, for teaching me about zine history. When I lead zine workshops, the first thing I tell youth is that zines have always been written by people of colour. We credit Ida B. Wells' anti-lynching pamphlets as the first recorded political zine in North America. We have always been on the forefront of zines, and we will always be here.

I admit, I am a pretty big zine nerd. I have learned more from the truth spilled onto the pages of zines than from any mainstream publication. Zines have given me a creative outlet combining all the things I love: activism, storytelling, layout design, binding, calligraphy, photography, art, and shit talking. And all you need to make one is a piece of paper and a pen!

We have taken a hiatus from *¿SERIO? Zine*, but Alvaro and I continue to produce zines as new core organizers for Brown and Proud Press. We found a space that welcomes people of colour to use zines as a catalyst for social change and collective healing. My zine filosofía is that they are autonomous, accessible, affordable art. I want to continue to make zines for my community that illuminate the beauty of our resistance as Black, Brown, Indigenous peoples. Hit me up si quieres collaborate!

Luz is a Mexican writer, fotógrafa, bookmaker, and overall creative. **@lightofyourvida**

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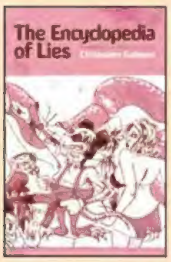

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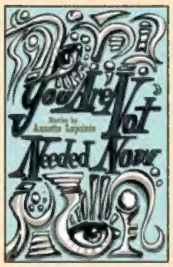

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